CITY JOURNAL

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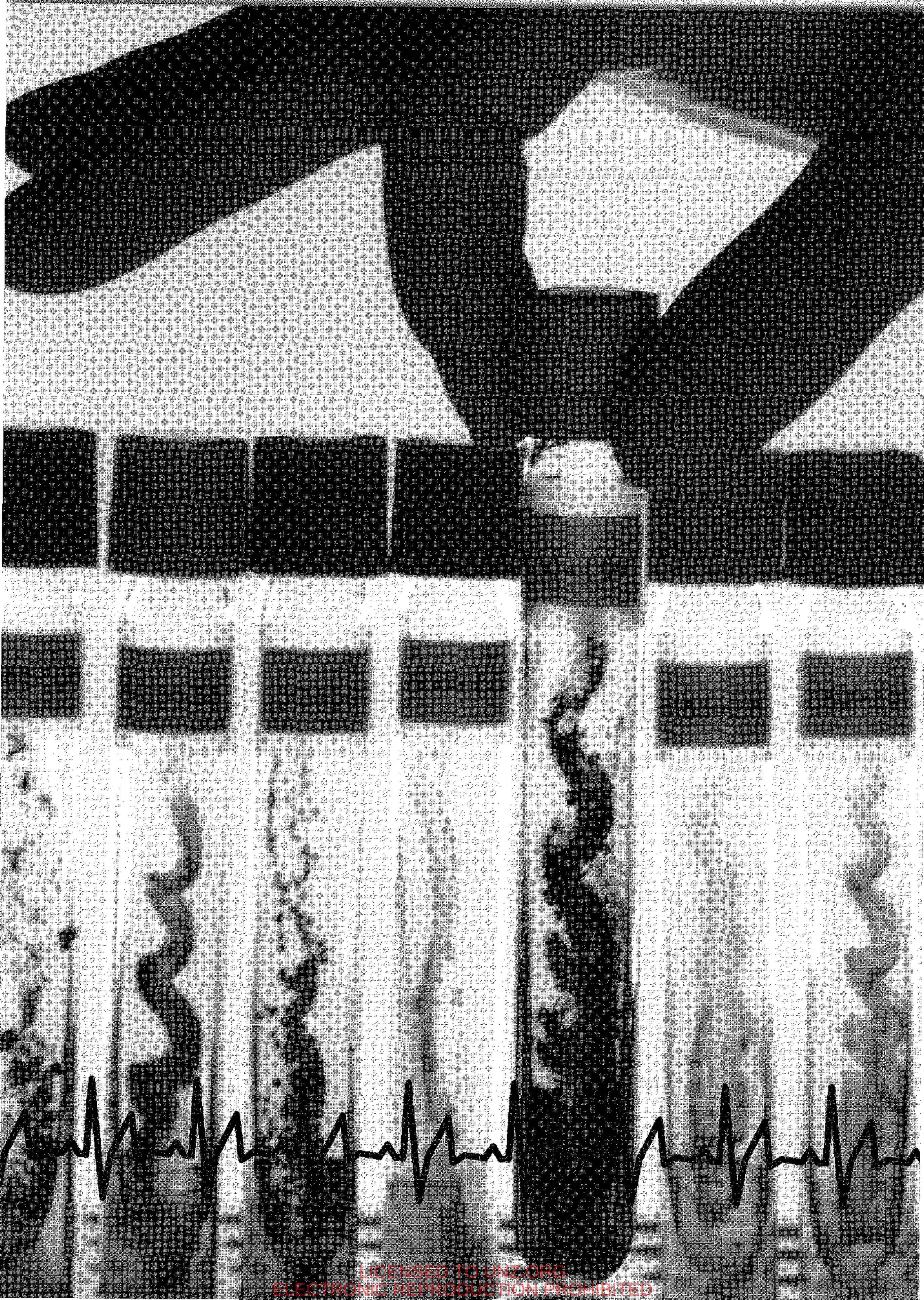

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CITY JOURNAL

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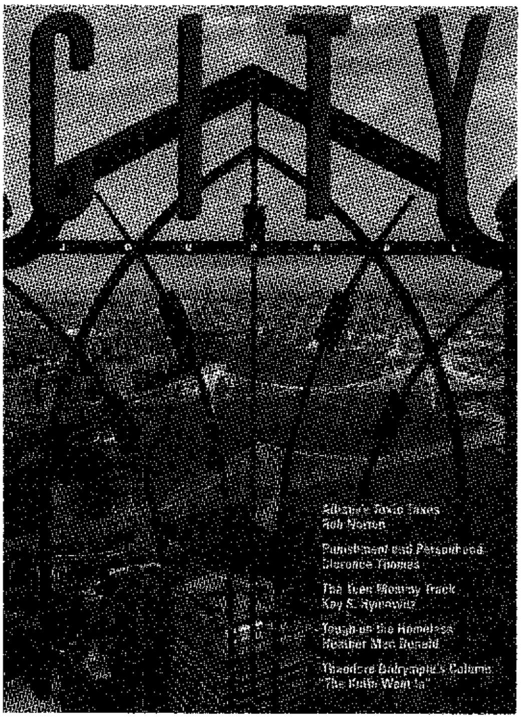
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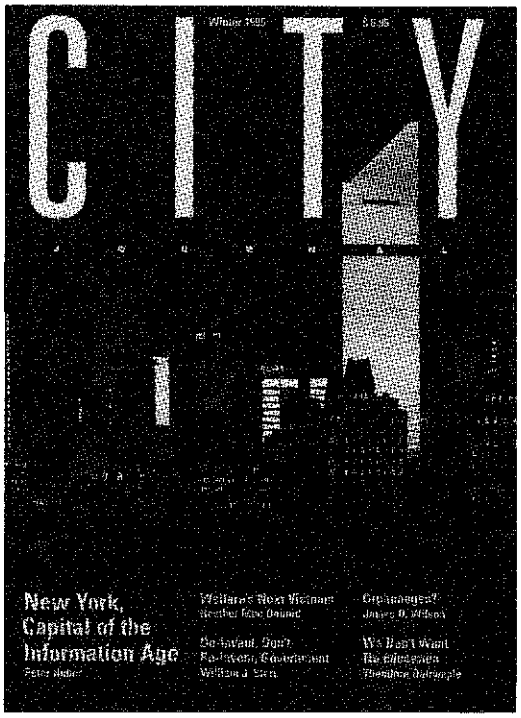
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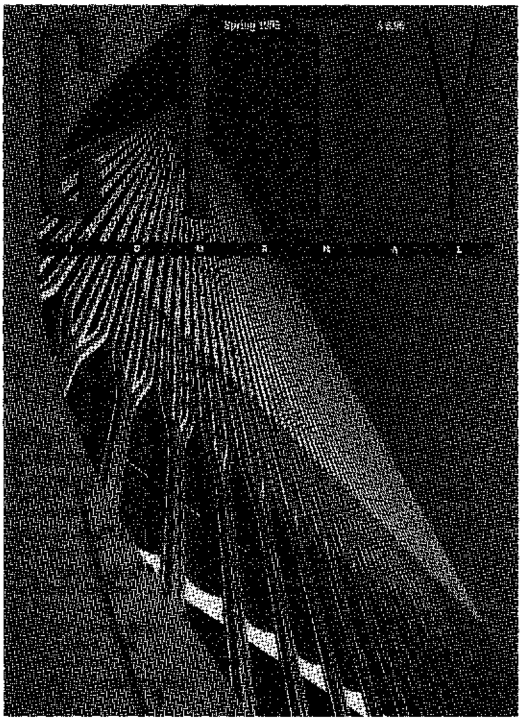
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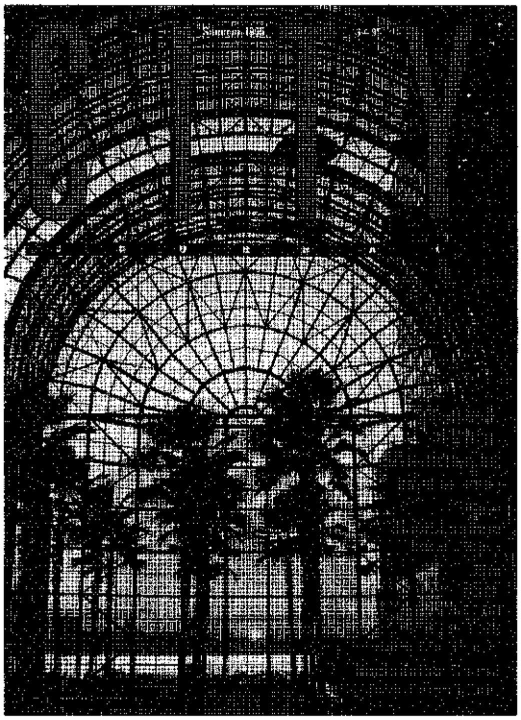
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In Prospect

David Garrard Lowe's utterly enjoyable article on the building of Rockefeller Center (page 78) reminds us of New York's key role in making popular culture. But how different a culture it was when the center's anchor, the Radio Corporation of America, beamed Burns and Allen to the brand-new radio audience. What a different worldview shined out from the movies shown in the center's new Radio City Music Hall: *Top Hat* or *Bringing Up Baby*—made by RCA-controlled RKO.

These entertainments radiated the same urbane, sophisticated values that Rockefeller Center's architecture expressed; they helped forge an American culture that was optimistic, tolerant, and civil. Across Rockefeller Plaza was the old Time & Life Building, a beacon of middlebrow culture that embodied similar values in mass-circulation magazines.

New York is still the center of the mass-culture business, with Rockefeller Center itself still home to Time Inc. (now Time Warner), NBC-TV, and the Associated Press. So when our political debate brings mass culture to center stage, New York is deeply implicated. Indeed, both Robert Dole and William Bennett have singled out Time Warner as a target for their charge that rap music and violent movies are degrading America's culture.

These criticisms are right on the mark. But New Yorkers who've spoken up so far have dismissed them, using three arguments worth examining. First, it is said, no studies show that violent, degraded entertainments cause people to do violent, degraded things. That view misunderstands how culture works. Culture is an entire environment of beliefs and customs, the medium in which we make sense of our experience. The cumulative effect of songs, ads, newscasts, and the like is what counts. If most messages you hear, from the streets and from the corporate glass towers, are filled with resentment, violence, licentiousness, contempt for authority, and materialism, how can the result be anything other than a coarsening of spirit that produces the barbarous behavior the tabloids report every day?

Entertainment millionaires often proffer the second argument: rap music is the authentic expression of inner-city pain, which they bring before the nation almost as a public service. This argument stands at the tail end of a 30-year transformation of our culture, in which we didn't jettison morality altogether, as some say, but traded in one moral code for a new set of values. We learned to worship authentic expression: you must "be in touch with your feelings" and "let it all hang out." In the naive sixties, when all we wanted was sexual liberation, who knew that human impulses were as dark as they are, that what would "hang out" would be the wish to mutilate women that's often celebrated in rap?

Our culture also came to believe that the environment, not the criminal, was responsible for crime. Since evil deeds are a symptom of something wrong in society, if rappers sing of killing cops or brutalizing women, society is lucky to have the early warning that it's sick, before some acute disease (riots, say) breaks out. Ideas like these grew out of good intentions 30 years ago; now they are often merely a cynical rationale for making money.

Finally, the charge that rap music's critics support *some* benighted policies—and so cannot possibly be right on *any* subject—recalls that the forging of our new culture went hand in hand with an effort to delegitimize the old. The formula of the seventies TV show *All in the Family* is a case in point: each week, Archie Bunker's daughter and son-in-law taught viewers some lesson of the new culture while demonstrating that Archie's own working-class views were unworthy of respect. The lesson took: Archie Bunker's brethren—the hardhats the sixties generation despised as reactionary—have transmogrified into manual workers who resemble 1960s hippies, with long hair, calico headbands, marijuana breaks, alienation, and (thanks to the new sexual morality) increasingly disintegrated families. Progress?

In two generations, Rockefeller Center has gone from Fred Astaire to Snoop Doggy Dogg. *That's* bankruptcy. ●

Soundings

Coliseum on the Charles

The State of Massachusetts and the City of Boston plan to waste $1 billion on a project with a name worthy of a Roman Caesar: Megaplex.

Its promoters advertise Megaplex, a combination domed stadium and convention center, as an economic-development candy mountain. During construction, they claim, it will produce profits for contractors, wages for their employees, and, of course, tax revenues for the state and the city. Once Megaplex opens, sports fans and conventioneers will flock in, boosting the profits of nearby hotels, restaurants, and other businesses—bringing, again, more tax revenues. The Megaplex, they say, will pay for itself, raising more than enough tax money to cover construction and operating costs.

This "multiplier" theory—that every dollar spent on such a project generates many dollars of additional economic activity—is familiar in New York, where political insiders made similar claims in 1979 to justify building the Javits Convention Center at city and state expense. But when politicians try to sell these big state-capitalist projects, they never consider the "de-multiplier." What if the tax moneys used to build these facilities were left instead in the hands of taxpayers, to save, invest, or consume as they saw fit? This would also produce profits, jobs, and tax revenues—to an even greater degree, since private entrepreneurs are better at seeing profit opportunities than government. But state capitalism blocks the opportunity.

In practice, the multiplier turns out to be a myth. Not only is the Javits Center now infested with organized crime; it has never produced a real operating profit, let alone begun to recover its capital costs. This is the common pattern: in a survey of 25 government-built convention centers, Edwin Mills, director of real estate research at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, found that yearly operating *losses* averaged 42 percent of revenue. In 1989 the Washington, D.C., convention center was 98 percent booked —but taxpayers had to pony up $5.4 million to cover its operating deficit and another $9 million for debt service.

The governor of Massachusetts and the mayor of Boston should spend a day at Logan Airport talking with Harvard and MIT professors returning from their consulting stints in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and the Third World. The scholars would be able to tell the politicians what they've been telling foreign leaders: stop embarking on state capitalist projects and instead strive to create an environment where the market economy can flourish, generating real wealth.

—*William J. Stern*

This Market Sure Isn't Free

The cash-strapped City of New York is considering a plan to subsidize the Pathmark supermarket chain to the tune of $12 million in loan guarantees and tax breaks to open a store in East Harlem. To take advantage of this largesse, Pathmark has agreed to pay $20 per square foot—double the market rent—for the store. The project's supporters say only special benefits will tempt a major supermarket into an impoverished area.

But the subsidies will most benefit two politically connected nonprofit organizations, whose supporters, a who's who of the African-American establishment, include Congressman Charles Rangel and the Reverend Calvin Butts. Pathmark will pay the rent to the East Harlem Abyssinian Triangle, a joint venture of the two nonprofits.

That rent is so high, says Abyssinian Triangle project manager Joan McCloud, because "that's what we need to pay the debt." But the numbers tell a different story. The nonprofits are buying the land from the city for $1.5 million, borrowing another $7.5 million for construction and other expenses. Collecting $1.06 million a year in rent, they could pay off a $9 million loan at a market rate of interest in about 16 years. But instead they will be paying back the loan over

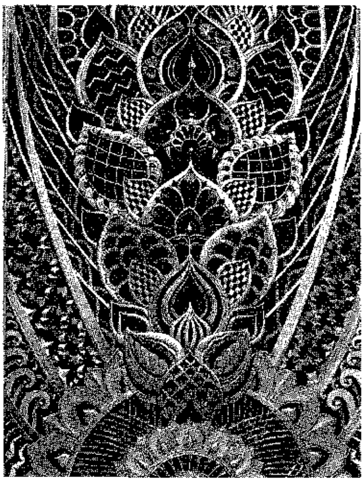
25 years at a mere 3 percent. City Councilman Antonio Pagan, a fierce critic of the Pathmark deal, characterizes it as a "massive payoff" for the powerful nonprofits.

The deal is already hurting local merchants. Efraim Olavarria planned to expand his East Harlem supermarket into a larger Fine Fare store. But General Trading, Fine Fare's holding company, told him: "Due to the fact that Pathmark is going to open a superstore within your store's customer base . . . we feel that it's in the best interest of General Trading not to make any investments in that neighborhood."

A short hop to Newark would disprove the claim that major supermarkets need special enticements to open stores in poor urban areas. In that city's Central Ward, as impoverished as Harlem, Monsignor William Linder persuaded Pathmark to open a superstore in 1990—without subsidies or tax breaks. The store is very profitable, with revenues per square foot more than twice the national average for supermarkets. A nonprofit run by Monsignor Linder owns the store in partnership with Pathmark and receives two-thirds of the profits, which it uses to provide an array of social services.

The contrast with East Harlem couldn't be sharper. Instead of charging rent, the Newark nonprofit shares the risk with Pathmark by taking a portion of the profits. In East Harlem the nonprofit coalition has no financial stake in the supermarket's success; it just cashes in as an above-market landlord. In a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose arrangement, the East Harlem Abyssinian Triangle collects rent payments if the store succeeds, and because of its loan guarantee, the city gets the tab if it fails.

The Pathmark project is now on the mayor's desk. He should veto it. If Newark can open a Pathmark without government aid, why can't New York? —*Richard Miniter*


ANDREW BORDWIN (3)

What About the Children?

Crying and shaking uncontrollably, many babies born addicted to crack refuse to take food; many die. To spare children such a fate, some states require addicted mothers-to-be to get treatment. (See "Yes, Drug Treatment Can Work," page 44.) But in New York the mothers' "liberty interests" are paramount, under a recent ruling by state Supreme Court Justice Kristin Booth Glen in the case known as *Tanya P.*

Homeless, mentally ill, and three months pregnant, Tanya P. was arrested on New Year's Day 1993 for trying to set fire to a shelter and for smoking crack. Police took her to the Bellevue Hospital psychiatric unit, where she voluntarily began in-house drug treatment and anti-psychotic medication. But a month before her baby was due, she demanded release. The hospital refused, under a city policy that allowed involuntary commitment for drug treatment during pregnancy. Represented by the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), Tanya sued, and persuaded Justice Glen to release her immediately.

Now—two years later—Glen has issued an opinion in the case, outlawing statewide the involuntary commitment of pregnant addicts for drug treatment. Glen found the evidence of "correlations between cocaine use during pregnancy and low birth weight, obstetrical complications, and even some long-term effects on infants born to cocaine-using mothers" insufficient to justify curtailing a mother's liberty.

Glen—who will soon leave the bench to become dean of City

University Law School—either misunderstood the evidence or waved it aside, says Dr. Kathleen Brady, director of clinical services at the Medical University of South Carolina's Center for Drug and Alcohol Services. "There is a tremendous amount of hard evidence that crack has a horrible effect on the outcome of pregnancies." Smoking crack greatly increases the risk not only of premature birth but also of death—of both mother and child—during childbirth.

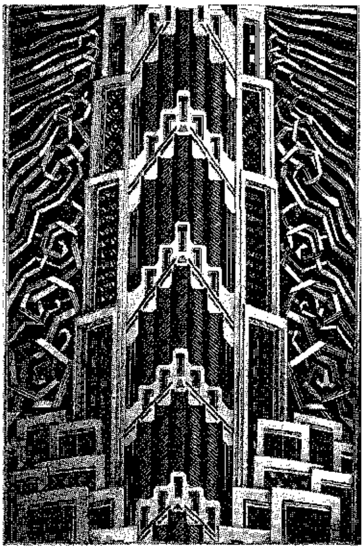
Donna Lieberman, Tanya's NYCLU attorney, told *New York Newsday* that the decision "affirms the principles of equality for women in our society when it comes to medical care. A woman does not lose her constitutional rights when she becomes pregnant." Is it really justice to sacrifice children to such an immoderate notion of adults' freedom?

—Heather Mac Donald

A Constructive Change

Anyone who's ever tried to plaster two bricks together in New York has horror stories about the city's Building Department. In Manhattan two years ago, for instance, plumbing inspections were backed up for 16 weeks, so a business otherwise ready to open had to sit idle, awaiting inspection of its rest rooms. And the wait for a final occupancy permit was so long that many developers simply moved people in before getting one.

But Mayor Giuliani's buildings commissioner, Queens civil engineer Joel A. Miele, has speeded things up radically: today the wait for plumbing inspections in Manhattan is down to 12 days. Miele's most important innovation is "self-certification." Licensed architects, engineers, plumbers, and electricians can now obtain building permits automatically, without submitting their plans to the department. "The fact that these people possess licenses certifies they will be building according to code," explains department spokesman Vahey Tiryakian. The Building Department spot-checks 20 percent of self-certifications; a developer who fails loses the ability to self-certify and may eventually lose his license altogether.



The administration has proposed legislation to the City Council that would allow self-certification for final occupancy permits as well. While self-certification isn't allowed for large construction projects needing special permits or land-use reviews, most of the 35,000 permit applications the department receives each year involve simple alterations to existing structures.

Miele has also introduced "one-stop shopping" for home builders, who can go to a single borough-based office and get all the permits they need. "The Building Department has people there who can make decisions on the spot," says Tiryakian. Miele has done all this while cutting staff from 758 employees when he took office to 595 now.

Miele's next step is to begin computerizing the department's records and drawings, making access easier for builders and contractors, who eventually may even be able to order construction permits online. "The administration is trying to work with the people who want to build in the city rather than against us," says Al Gerosa, chairman of the New York Building Industry Council. "That's a big change."

—John A. Barnes

Cui Bono?

We're used to legal aid and pro bono lawyers siding against community efforts to restore civility, as when Sullivan & Cromwell attorneys teamed with the Legal Aid Society to challenge New York's ban on subway panhandling.

But in Charlotte, North Carolina, pro bono and legal aid lawyers really do advance the public interest. There they are working with police and city officials, using state public-nuisance laws to combat drug activity. Ted Fillette, deputy director of Legal Services of Southern Piedmont, developed the program in response to pleas from residents of several low-income neighborhoods that his office serves, in concert with volunteer lawyers from the Mecklenberg County Bar Association.

"There were a lot of Habitat for Humanity homes in these communities, and right around the corner there would be a leased premises with a drug dealer working out of it," says William L. Brown, chairman of the bar association's volunteer lawyers committee. (See "It's Time to Take Habitat for Humanity Seriously," page 35.) The program brings legal action against landlords who allow such activity to continue on their property. Attorneys are usually able to reach a settlement with landlords to halt the illegal activity. In one case a judge effectively shut down a house where 22 people were arrested in 18 months for such crimes as drug trafficking, cocaine possession, possession of a stolen vehicle, and assault with a firearm.

Charlotte Mayor Richard Vinroot has won a commitment from 22 Charlotte law firms, including the one he still works for, to help the program by taking on one drug-nuisance case a year. Other cities would benefit if lawyers recognized, as they have in Charlotte, that the public good lies in protecting fragile inner-city communities, not in supporting their most antisocial elements. —*Charlotte Allen*

Don't Drop Your Guard Yet

New York and other cities are congratulating themselves on declining crime rates, but the celebration may be premature. Princeton criminologist John DiIulio warns that we'll likely see a sharp upsurge in crime over the next few years.

Young males are the most crime-prone segment of the population: longitudinal studies have established that some 6 percent of 14- to 17-year-old boys are chronic offenders, responsible for more than 70 percent of juvenile violent crime—and about a seventh of violent crime overall. Crime rates have gone down largely for demographic reasons: a declining birthrate after the baby boom means there are fewer male teenagers and young adults.

But five years from now there will be 500,000 more teenage males in the country than today—meaning that by the year 2000 as many as 30,000 more hard-core predators will be on the streets. What's more, DiIulio notes, on average today's youngest criminals commit more crimes—and more savage crimes—than young criminals of the past.

A May report from the New York City Board of Education is an early-warning sign that DiIulio's predictions may be on the mark. Violence in the city's schools, the report found, leaped by 28 percent in just one year—almost 2,000 more incidents ranging from harassment to robbery. Even elementary schools are now reporting assaults. Mayor Giuliani's response is a proposal that the Police Department take over supervision of 3,000 uniformed but unarmed school safety officers. More urgent is a thoroughgoing reform of our outmoded juvenile justice system, which is inadequate for the serious crimes young offenders now commit. —*Rita Kramer*

A Losing Bet

Never let it be said that New York doesn't think ahead. When the State Legislature reluctantly enacted Governor Pataki's proposal for a new form of gambling—the quick-draw video lottery—in its recent budget, it thoughtfully set aside $1.5 million for treatment of compulsive gambling.

Such treatment will undoubtedly prove necessary. The game will flash new winning numbers to video terminals in restaurants, bars, and bowling alleys throughout the state; the rapid response time and the availability of alcohol will make the game especially alluring to compulsive gamblers. "We know we will see people become pathological from this game," says Don Thoms, president of the New York Council of Problem Gambling, the trade group for those who treat gambling addiction.

So why didn't the council's members oppose the bill creating the video lottery? "We do not want to be seen as prohibitionist," says Thoms. Perhaps, but state-sponsored gambling means more compulsive gamblers and more demand for treatment—and, in this case, a juicy fivefold increase in state funding for the gambling rehabilitation providers Thoms represents.

For compulsive gamblers, quick-draw lotto will become as insidious as crack—and the poor, who are most likely to prove susceptible to its blandishment, can least afford it. The governor should have broken the state's addiction to new forms of revenue, not given it another fix.

—*Heather Mac Donald*

Safe Zone

The Starrett City housing complex is an oasis of safety in East New York, one of the nation's most violent neighborhoods. Starrett City has no open-air drug markets and few violent crimes. In all of 1994, police recorded only 24 car thefts, 12 burglaries, 6 aggravated assaults, and no rapes in the complex. (The year saw one murder, a case of domestic violence.) "When there's a robbery, it's still an event," says one resident.

No, Starrett City isn't some gated, upscale enclave—most of its residents are minorities, and 90 percent receive government rent subsidies. Its secret: for the past 20 years the company that runs the complex, Grenadier Realty, has employed a security force, now consisting of 60 officers, to patrol the grounds. Each Starrett guard is certified as a "special officer" by the New York City Police Department and is licensed to carry a gun. Although paid entirely with private funds, the guards have nearly all the powers of regular police officers, including the authority to make arrests and book suspects within the complex.

Exemplifying the crime-prevention philosophy of community policing, Starrett City's guards patrol the complex's apartment buildings, parking lots, shopping center, and school, keeping an eye out for strangers. They enforce the countless minor, sometimes unspoken, standards of public behavior that determine whether a neighborhood will seem—and ultimately become—safe. When the rare felony occurs, the guards usually summon city police officers rather than deal with it themselves.

All of this shows that poor neighborhoods can benefit from a strong order-keeping effort. It shows, too, that the benefits of private security needn't be exclusively for the wealthy. —*Tucker Carlson*

A Passing Fancy

When Charles Mingo, principal of Du Sable High School on Chicago's impoverished South Side, investigated the attendance records of his incoming freshmen, he discovered just how topsy-turvy Chicago's school system is. Dozens of his students hadn't completed eighth grade, and in a random sample of 36 freshmen, 16 had missed at least a full year of school between fifth and eighth grades. Only five of the 36 were not chronically truant during at least one of those years.

The system deems these children ready for high school anyway, under its policy of "social promotion." A Chicago public school student cannot be held back more than one year before eighth grade and, even if he fails to obtain an eighth-grade diploma, he is automatically deemed a high schooler at age 15.

The rationale? Educators are trying to discourage kids from dropping out, says Dawne

Simmons, spokeswoman for Superintendent Argie K. Johnson: "Our own research has shown one of the highest predictors of a dropout in high school is an overaged student." And, true, since social promotion became official policy in 1990, the high school dropout rate has declined a bit, from 48 percent to 43 percent.

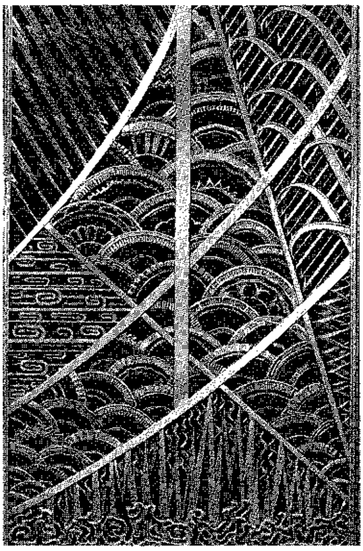
But when you look at the city's high school statistics, it's hard not to see this policy as an effort to deny system-wide failure. At more than half of Chicago's public high schools, the average student scores in the bottom 1 percent of the nation in the ACT college entrance exam, and 40 percent of high school graduates who apply to the Windy City's Malcolm X College test below eighth-grade reading levels; 30 percent test below sixth grade.

Curbing dropouts is a worthy goal, but only if schools are providing an education. Chicago's schools are failing their students, even if they won't flunk them.

—*Maribeth Vander Weele*

It Takes All Kinds

Just when you thought you'd mastered the requirements of "diversity," another oppressed group joins the list. The latest candidate: matricides. Derek Ho, a junior at Harvard, criticized his school for rescinding the admission of a student who turned out to have murdered her mother: "If they are serious about recognizing different life stories, then she is an exemplary story we don't often see at Harvard," he told the *Harvard Crimson*. "Harvard has lost the opportunity to admit someone who would have added to the class of 1999."



The life story of the student in question, 19-year-old Gina Grant, is different all right. Five years ago she bludgeoned her mother to death, then stuck a knife through her throat and twisted her lifeless hand around it to make it look like a suicide. After first fingering her boyfriend, Grant spent a mere six months in a juvenile detention center. She has never publicly confessed to the crime or expressed remorse. In a classic case of chutzpah, her application to Harvard stressed that she was an orphan (her father died of cancer when she was 11). She answered no to the question whether she had been disciplined or put on probation; when a Harvard interviewer asked about her mother's death, she said it was an accident.

When Harvard withdrew Grant's admission because of these lies, commentators pronounced her doubly victimized—first by an allegedly abusive mother, then by the university. *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich portrayed her dishonesty as a noble gesture: "In exchange for her dignified silence," he intoned, "she got no rewards, only a smear campaign by Harvard." *Boston Globe* columnist Patricia Smith caricatured Harvard's response to Grant's past: "'Ick. Yuck. Phooey. She's tainted. She doesn't deserve to walk our musty, hallowed halls because she's not 100 percent pure, honest, and upstanding.'"

Such rhetoric is chilling. Smith mocks Harvard's concern about Grant's past and her dissembling as an obsession with "purity," as if only repressed snobs care about honesty and such outmoded taboos as the injunction not to kill. "Meanwhile, here on earth," Smith declaims, "we realize that human beings are fallible." Of course we do; that is precisely why we need a moral code. But if people like Grant are exempted from ordinary morality on the grounds of "victimization," is anything left of that code?

—*Heather Mac Donald*

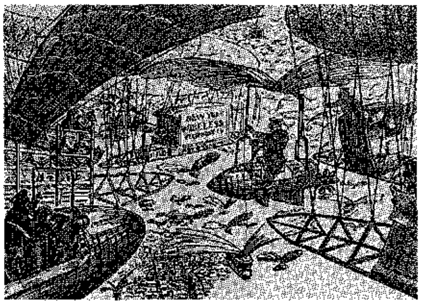
Bring Back the Urban Visionaries

David Gelernter

Why have the best technology brains stopped trying to solve urban problems?

In 1940 you could catch an express train from New Haven to Grand Central that got you there in 90 minutes. Today there is no express, and the trip takes an hour and 41 minutes on Metro-North. Why have we made no progress in 50 years? Because people no longer care to travel from New Haven to Manhattan? Because our time is no longer valuable, because we no longer understand technology and engineering, because 1940's society was richer than ours, because modern cars and highways have made rail commuting obsolete? Because 90 minutes is the shortest time consistent with the speed of light?

Well, no. The real problem is that today's technology visionaries know little and care less about the mundane problems of daily urban life. Politicians, who tend to have no interest or money to devote to technology, are not up to the task of spurring them on. Demoralized urban voters stopped demanding progress decades ago; they only hope things won't get worse. But technology can solve such basic urban problems as transportation just as it has in the past. We are a poor excuse for a society if we can't put our best technologies to work making urban life better.

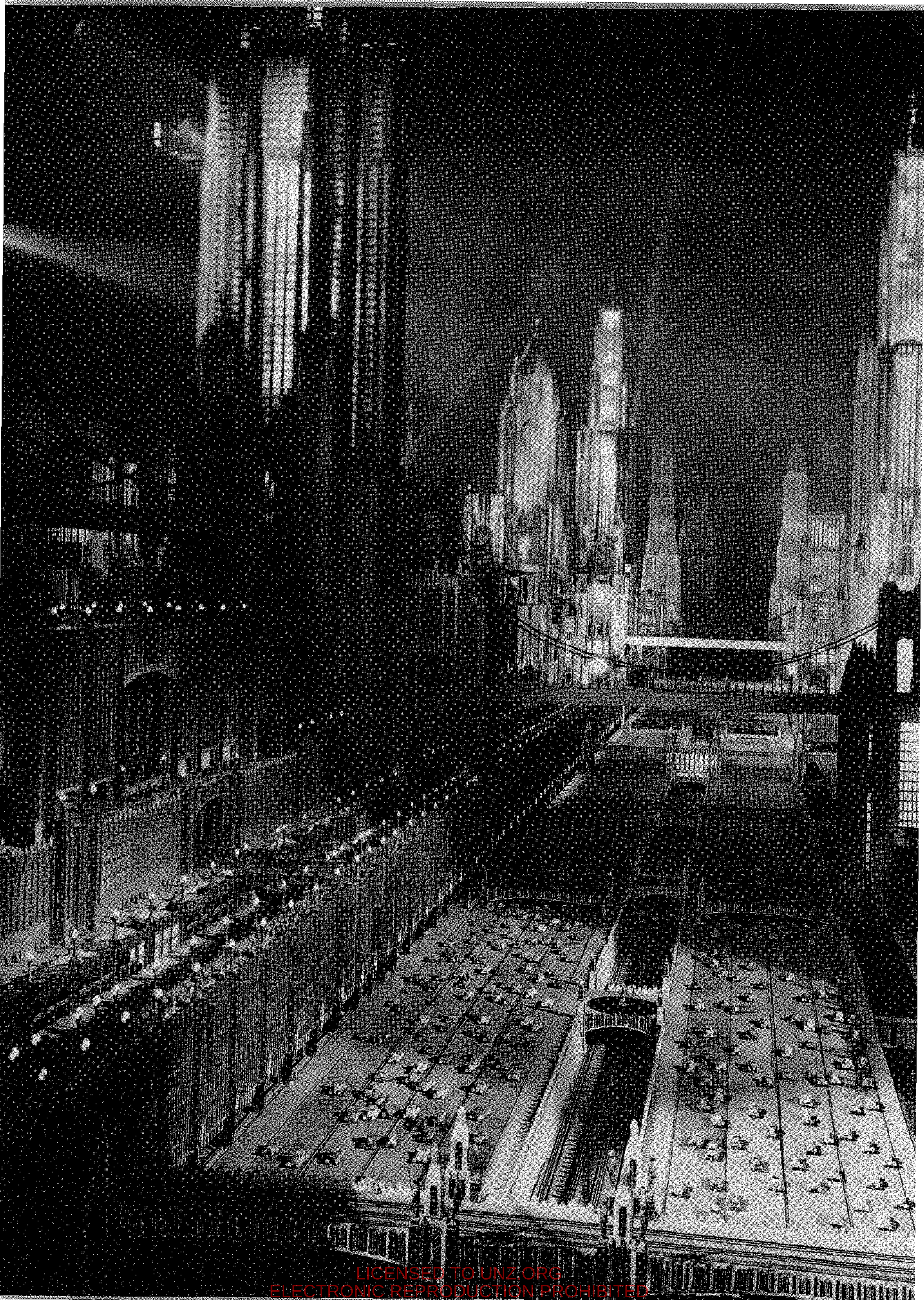


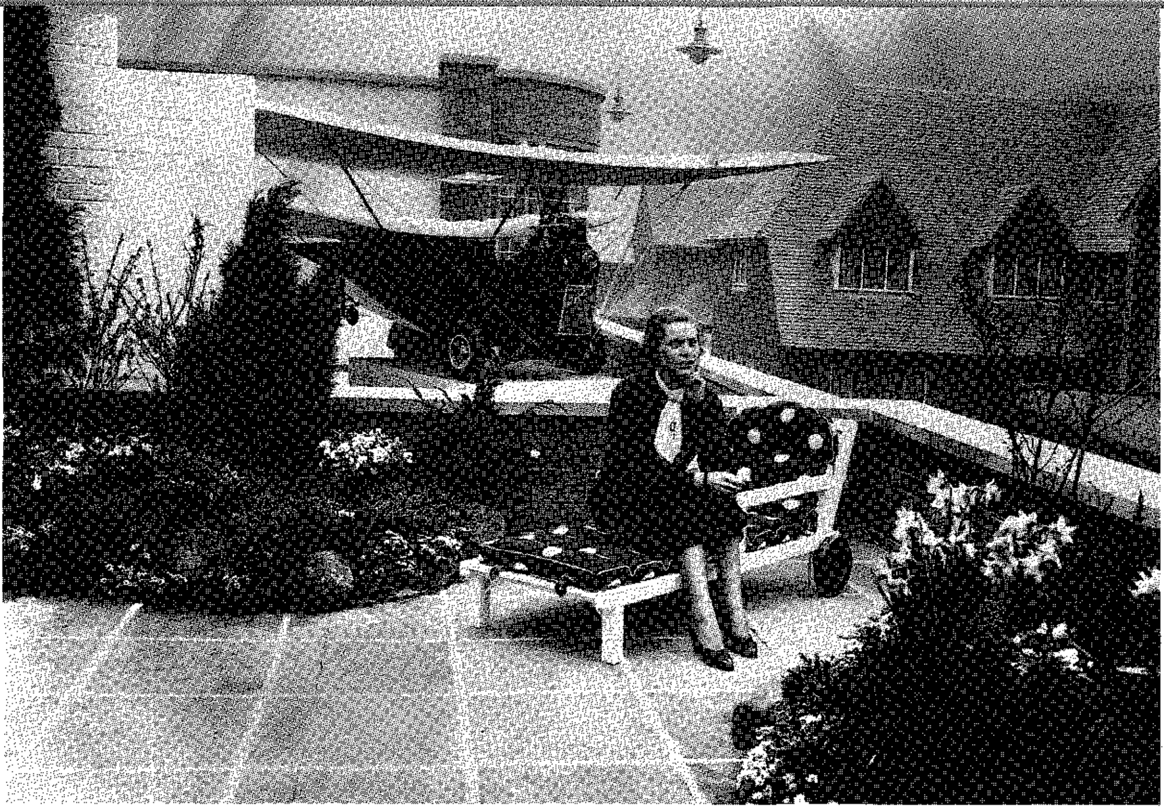
A futuristic traffic jam, 1907

Occasionally I catch the Long Island Rail Road at Stony Brook, near the island's midpoint, to travel into Manhattan. It is an illuminating two-hour trip. On the first leg you ride in old coaches pulled by a diesel engine. At Huntington you get out and wait on the platform until the panting diesel train departs and an electric one glides up, hissing, to take you into the city. After the change, the towns get bigger and the houses are packed tighter; parallel tracks join yours on either side, and then you duck into the tunnel and emerge in Penn Station.

The electric leg of the trip is smooth, quiet, and modestly comfortable. The diesel leg is not: half the windows are too scratched and dirty to see out of; the coaches quiver along at what seems like 15 miles an hour. Changing trains is a pain: you feel like a flustered chicken driven prematurely from the henhouse. And that's when things work well. On my way back last time, the diesel connection was half an hour late, and I stood on the platform (for some

AT LEFT: THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE. AT RIGHT: PHOTOFEST





UPI/BETTMANN

The Garage of the Future, 1936; and (previous page) a scene from the 1930 film 'Just Imagine.'

reason the transfer point is far downstream from the station) and patiently froze. A girl in a red hat muttered "I hate this line." Occasionally the loudspeaker emitted strange gurglings, like a radio talking to another radio in a language only radios understand. "Another big complaint against the Long Island is that rarely is anyone given accurate information on the cause of delays or train problems," reports the *New York Times*—in 1974.

Even in 1966, when New York State acquired the Long Island Rail Road from the moribund Penn Central, the line's diesel branches were embarrassing throwbacks; the state eagerly awaited "detailed engineering studies on several projects under consideration," one being (of course) electrification of the Huntington–to–Port Jefferson branch. Gas turbine coaches were an alternative—they could run on diesel or electric tracks. In the mid-seventies the railroad announced that it would fund Port Jefferson electrification from a new state bond issue. Also in the works were a rail spur from Manhattan to Kennedy Airport and a new East Side rail station at Third Avenue and 48th Street. And that is the end of the story.

Consider one other incident. This February the Metropolitan Transportation Authority voted to cut back New York's subway and bus service for the first time since the mid-1970s. "No one is talking about a wholesale retreat from the historic role of public transportation," the *New York Times* hastened to reassure. Well *that's* one great big relief. But in 1940, New York had bus and subway services similar to those it has today—except that the subways were safe, their seats were cushioned, their stations were relatively clean, and they cost a nickel (around 45 cents in today's money). In Manhattan, elevated lines ran up Second, Third, and Ninth avenues; a handy trolley went crosstown on 42nd Street. Two East River, ten Hudson River, and three Staten Island ferries plied local waters. The Union Airways Terminal opposite Grand Central was an all-airlines ticketing and service center. Wall Street–bound Long Island commuters landed at the Downtown Skyport. Of the various limo companies, the Rolls Rental Service charged $3 an hour inside the city, $4 outside, for a chauffeured Rolls-Royce. Express trains, as I have mentioned, sped between New Haven and Grand Central. Just what would a "wholesale retreat from the historic role of public transportation" look like?

Peter Huber tells us, in a fascinating *City Journal* article ("New York: Capital of the Information Age," Winter 1995), that Manhattan is a "cyberquasar pumping out vast amounts of energy in the form of radio waves and glass-encapsulated laser light. . . . Few New Yorkers have any real awareness of the amazingly fecund telecosm seething under their feet." The city's main economic challenge is to keep its telecommunication capabilities second to none, in order "to export its vast intellectual capital better, faster, cheaper, more colorfully, more interactively than anyone else." At such an exciting juncture, one might think, who cares about a small-potatoes issue like moving commuters in and out?

I think Huber is right, but I also think we ought to get over our dazzlement with modern technology and address technologists differently. Fecund telecosms are all well and good, we ought to tell them, but while you're up would you mind arranging for the trains to run on time? The irony is that the eager technologists Huber lauds are exactly the ones who *could* play a key role in reviving cities in general and New York in particular—except that the problems of the mere physical city are ones most technologists don't understand or care to solve. Instead of rallying them, thinkers like Huber and politicians like Newt Gingrich and Al Gore encourage them to believe that a brave new cyber-civilization can arise on the rotten footings of our present-day one. But it can't. Responsible technologists would use their art to fix those footings first.

Our technology is powerful, but technologists no longer know quite what to do with it. The dazzling improvement in the quality of life over the first part of the twentieth century depended, in large part, on technology's dedication to making ordinary life better. By the mid-sixties, the utopian dream that had long been the central unifying belief of the American community was coming true. America was becoming a land in which the working and middle classes, not just their bosses, were rich and comfortable; in which you could work in the city but own your own home out in the green suburbs; in which you could aspire to any job for which you were qualified, regardless of your race or religion or last name. Naturally, the shared American utopian vision slowly deflated: we could no longer strive for Utopia because we were there.

Technologists, who had helped make the dream come true, lost their focus along with the rest of us, and today many of the best of them are like heroically gifted pianists who spend their lives plunking out pop tunes in bars. No concrete step would do the country more good than to reacquaint technologists with the problems of everyday life and to reintroduce the "technology visionaries" who once roamed and thrived here.

Consider what that might mean for New York's transportation systems, which at best are no better than 50 years ago. If roads and highways are better, traffic is worse; the railroads and subways are worse; travel choices are fewer. This lack of progress is a puzzle we rarely think about. We need transportation just as much now as half a century ago. We are much richer than in 1940: average income has roughly doubled. Americans on the whole are better educated: roughly a fifth are college graduates, versus 4 percent in 1940. We welcome into our workforce people who would have been excluded in 1940. Furthermore, for most of the past half century, New York City has believed in aggressive government and large-scale public spending on everything. So how could we have failed to progress?

The most important reason is this: we no longer have technology visionaries egging us on.

Today's thinking about technology and transportation is mostly useless to cities. It divides into three main schools of thought. The first believes that technology's fated role is to weaken the city or doom it. The second consists of railroad reactionaries wedded to ancient approaches. The third group, the smart-highway progressives, are at work on valuable ideas but don't go far enough and—most important—avoid the key question of public transport.

The first school is the most interesting, because its claims are the farthest-reaching. Mere physical transportation, the argument goes, is increasingly less important in the information-highway era. The proliferation of powerful computers and networks, of telecommuting and teleconferencing, will "allow people to live further away from crowded or dangerous urban areas." (This according to Esther Dyson, George Gilder, George Keyworth, and Alvin Toffler in a piece recently distributed over the Internet.) In some versions of this prophecy, the city limps offstage, weak but alive, as the curtain falls. In others it is less fortunate.

Is the city hanging by its fingertips on the verge of obsolescence? If so, it was hanging there in 1940 too and by now must be getting pretty comfortable in that position. The utopian "Broadacre City" Frank Lloyd Wright described in the mid-thirties was a sprawling suburb, its large office buildings spaced wide by green fields, each family settled on its own acre of land: railways and automobiles had made the old-fashioned city obsolete. In 1939 a documentary film called *The City* pronounced a blistering anathema on U.S. cities: they were dirty, noisy, dangerous, graceless rattraps headed straight for the dustbin of history. In the late thirties H. G. Wells foretold teleconferencing dead-accurately and concluded that "the existence of business centers is no longer imperative." (In other words, technology will "allow people to live further away from crowded or dangerous urban areas.") The demise-of-the-city trend had gathered so much momentum by 1956 that Robert Moses felt obliged to assert, "I do not believe that the metropolis is obsolete."

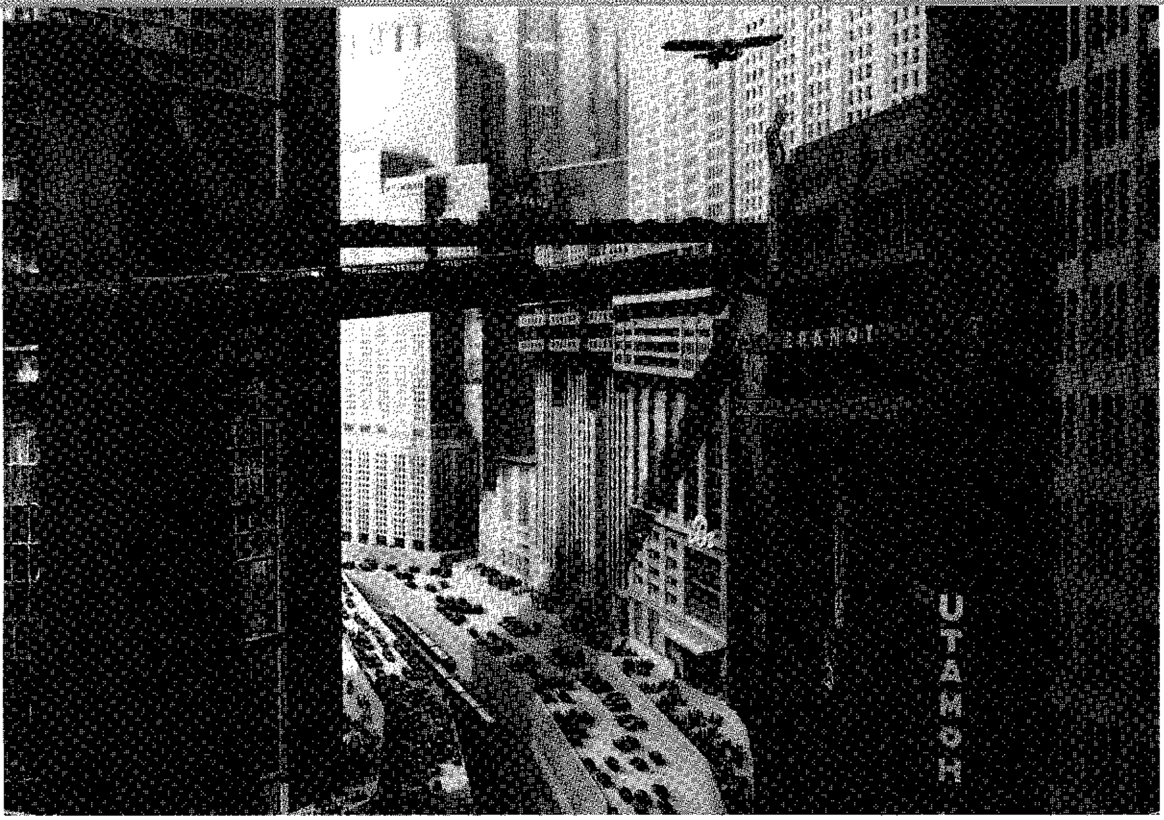
And now the information highway and powerful computers spell ultimate doom for the city. It's all true—up to a point: railroads *did* "allow people to live further away from crowded or dangerous urban areas" and did make cities less indispensable. So did telephones and the airplane. So did cars and the modern highway. So did the computer, and so will powerful computer networks. And yet people love cities and seek them out and always will, because they love the paradox of city life: the excitement and the soothing anonymity of the big crowd. The city will never be obsolete unless and until sheer rot *drives* people into the countryside.

Newly announced plans for a "world's fair on the Internet" embody the appealing optimism of cyber-punditry at its best. Visitors will examine a large collection of exhibitions via computer. People everywhere can browse the fair, and exhibitions can originate all over the world. An exhibition might be a multimedia city tour, or a demonstration of some spiffy new software. I like the idea and hope it succeeds; borrowing the term "world's fair" with its aura of brilliance and optimism is a master stroke. Yet this good idea casts a melancholy shadow. For all its potential fascination, no cyber-fair could possibly compete with or be remembered alongside a real one. The greatness of the great world's fairs was inseparable from their greatness as *places* where you saw daring architecture, heard music and fountains and the snap of flags, smelled the hot dogs, and above all joined the crowd. The *actual* crowd. People loved the great world's fairs and sought them out because they loved great occasions and company, and of course we still do.

Modern technology does *not* doom the city, because it does not change human nature. Besides, as Huber notes, "every important sphere of activity will always have a clearinghouse, an exchange, a central office, a hub." Meaning a city.

A brief word about the other two schools of thought. The railroad reactionaries propose to solve our transportation problems in the obvious 1940 way. James Sels, director of the California Department of Transportation, believes fervently in "high-technology transportation," but what that means to him is "alternative fuels to electric cars to high-speed rail." The fuels and the cars might make the air cleaner (although to what extent and at what cost are unclear), but they won't make transportation better and are not intended to. Then the inevitable railways. We can't afford to build them anymore, which is just as well; we shouldn't want to. The great advantage software and modern electronics confer is *flexibility* (I will discuss it below), and railroads are the least flexible of transport systems.

Finally, 1991 legislation authorized federal collaboration on a nationwide "Intelligent Highway System," and several projects in this area look interesting. The idea is to collect information about traffic and road conditions and relay it to drivers by means of message signs along the highway, radio broadcasts, and computers in each car. Drivers avoid tie-ups, and traffic flows



PHOTOFEST

The future city in 'Metropolis' (1927); and (page 19) the 1939 World's Fair Futurama.

more smoothly. A short "Smart Corridor Demonstration Project" will start operation around Santa Monica in mid-1995; analysts claim that within 20 years, services and paraphernalia for intelligent highways will be a $200 billion industry. Companies like Hughes, Loral, Rockwell, and Westinghouse have projects under way.

Intelligent highways are a great idea but don't go far enough and avoid the hard questions. They will help us squeeze more out of our customary ways of doing business. That's fine, but is there anything *new* out there—that we can afford? And what about *public* transportation?

The basic idea underlying public transportation in the software age ought to be: don't make passengers accommodate the schedule; make the schedule accommodate them.

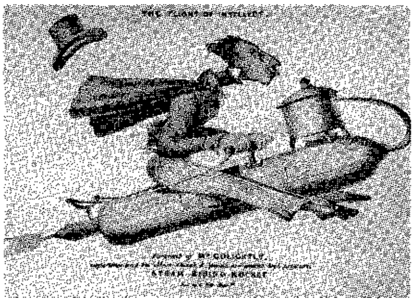
Imagine, to start, a fleet of jitneys—each is a van or airport limo—in constant motion around Manhattan. Prospective riders have little radios or cellular phones (at this level, the details aren't important); these "jitney clickers" communicate with central computers, which in turn talk to the jitney drivers. When you are ready to go somewhere (ordinarily you'd still be inside when you make this decision), you press a button on your clicker. If you are headed to the usual place for this time of day, that's all you do; the central computers have your profile on-line. Otherwise you hit a few more keys to tell the system your destination. The system responds with the number and color scheme of the jitney that will pick you up and the minutes within which it ought to reach you—presumably not many. You amble out to the curb.

The central computers have a complex task. Start with information about the whereabouts, destinations, and passenger loads of a fleet of constantly moving jitneys. Add an incoming stream of new ride requests. It's a daunting problem, but that's what computers are for. In our group at Yale we've developed a software framework for exactly this sort of problem, as have other research groups. Our framework is complex and requires a parallel computer to run—many computers working together on the same problem. But nowadays that sort of thing is easy and inexpensive to arrange. Modern techniques and hardware make it possible to run far more sophisticated applications than commercial and government sites typically bother with.

The goal is to replace buses by delivering a service similar to taxis—in some ways better—at public-transportation prices. Unlike a taxi, a cyber-jitney will make stops on the way to your destination, but clever computer scheduling assures that you won't go far out of your way.

Because accounting is handled in utility-bill style, dropping off goes more quickly than in a taxi: no money changes hands. When the jitney picks you up, it already knows where you are going, and Jitney Command can tell each vehicle where to turn on a block-by-block basis to avoid traffic, find the best route, and not get lost. Jitney Command also knows the exact customer demand moment by moment and can send out reinforcements as needed. (A further refinement: integrate the taxis into the system too.)

Could such a system compete with buses on cost? Possibly. It requires a fancy technological infrastructure that buses don't need, and substituting many vehicles for one necessarily means more drivers and more maintenance. But the cyber-jitneys have cost advantages too. Bus design is so elaborately regulated and buses have gotten so complex technologically that a bus is a pricey item (in the range of $180,000), and there aren't many suppliers. The market for jitney-type vehicles would be more competitive because the number of suppliers would be much larger: any builder of passenger vans, wagons, or limousines is a potential jitney supplier. A jitney would be cheaper to maintain than a bus and cheaper to run. Jitneys would do less damage to city streets and impede traffic less. Most important: cyber-jitneys would deliver far better service than buses. People are willing to shell out for better service; if a jitney ride costs 50 percent more than a bus ride, the new service might find lots of takers.


THE FLIGHT OF INTELLECT.
Portrait of Mr. GOLIGHTLY.
STEAM RIDING ROCKET

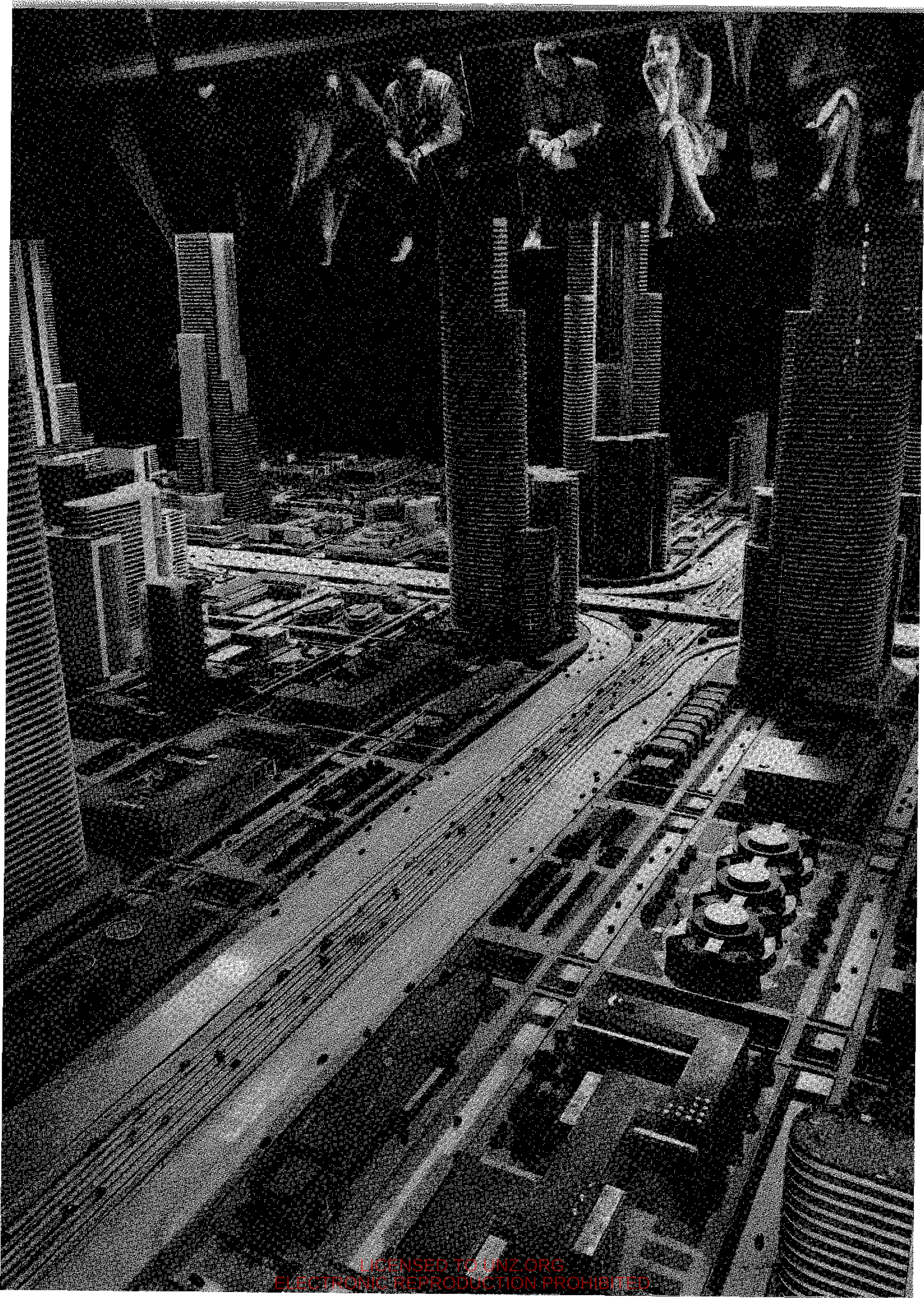
These hypotheses all point to the real underlying problem of urban transport: people should be discussing, arguing about, and evaluating possibilities like this, but they aren't. Sophisticated computer models would answer many questions about the plausibility of this new service, but such models are *not* under development.

Commuters too might benefit from cyber-jitneys. You'd get into your car, tell Suburban Jitney Command your ultimate destination, and start driving. You'd be directed to a particular parking spot in some field between your home and destination, you'd park, within a few minutes a jitney would pull up, and you'd be off. When inbound traffic is light, you'd drive farther and be assigned to a parking lot closer to the city. When traffic is heavy, you'd be batched more quickly into a jitney-load and park closer to home.

The main selling point of the suburban jitney versus the commuter train would be convenience: you make your own schedule and skip the detour to the local station. But suppose speed were our main objective. Contemplate the commuter railroads. Why on earth can't a person get from New Haven to Grand Central in an hour? Why are the trains so *slow*? They are constantly making stops, of course, but the fundamental excuses we hear most often are the limitations of the old-fashioned equipment and the bad condition of parts of the roadbed. The solutions, we are told, are better tracks and fancy new trains, possibly magnetic-levitation models. But common sense suggests something is out of whack in this calculation. Today any self-respecting car on a highway can easily sustain a speed of 75 miles per hour. So why not pave over the tracks? (Granted, we're no longer up to the demands of a genuine new highway, but in a project like this, much of the work has already been done.)

The buses that traveled our new commuter busroads might be conventionally powered or might run off the railroad's existing electrical system. Either way, buses could be scheduled far more flexibly than trains—assuming computer assistance as before. Suppose they ran on two-lane busroads, the outer lane for high-speed express travel and the inner for station stops. Most passengers want to travel between Manhattan and suburban points, so the typical bus would fill up at a suburban station, then plunge right into the outer lane for an express run to the city.

AT LEFT: THE MANSELL COLLECTION; AT RIGHT: CULVER PICTURES, INC.



Or maybe the suburban jitneys and the busroads should actually be *one* system: the jitneys would pick up passengers at the parking fields, or at their doorsteps, and then head straight for the (former) railroad right-of-way and plunge in. Or maybe the busroads and the *subways* should be one system: if we detrackified the subways, arriving commuter buses could drop passengers at any (former) subway station in the city.

Would it work? Would the costs be reasonable? We don't know, because at the moment no one cares. If the radical systems I have outlined don't make economic sense, pieces of them might. Maybe, for example, we ought to preserve the railroads and merely abolish coaches and stations. A train would consist of flatbed jitney-haulers; the jitney would pick you up, drive onto a flatbed for the trip into the city, then drive off again to deliver you to your final destination. And technology has more tricks up its sleeve if you don't like any of these. One thing is obvious: *systems like these are worth considering*. But *considering them* is exactly what we are not doing. We no longer debate such questions.

We used to, once. For example: the hit of the 1939 New York World's Fair was the General Motors Futurama, which presented, in a dramatic diorama that you glided over in a traveling armchair, the predictions of distinguished designer and technology visionary Norman Bel Geddes. Geddes had been a principal exponent of the streamlined style. His influential 1932 book, *Horizons*, promoted and illustrated a zoomy, elegant, streamlined aesthetic based on airplanes like the DC-1, launched by Douglas the previous year. "Streamlined" became *the* 1930s look. Geddes carried out ordinary industrial design commissions with distinction, but he did his best work in fantasy settings like the Futurama, where his imagination ran wild.

Geddes embodied many radical ideas in the Futurama—for example: the U.S. ought to build coast-to-coast superhighways. The Futurama put transcontinental superhighways on the national agenda. A debate followed. New York Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the arrogant genius who created a great deal of the New York transportation infrastructure that *we* have so conspicuously disdained to improve, liked some aspects of the Futurama but denounced this idea as "plain bunk." Highways should feed cities, he said. Geddes blasted back, condemning Moses' "short-range viewpoint"—not an accusation to which Moses was accustomed. The Army, on the other hand, was in favor of transcontinental superhighways. The *New York Times* was against them because they would cost too much—and hardly anyone wanted to drive cross-country anyway. Geddes responded in a book, in which he emphasized that his roads were for trucks and industry, not just for cars: "to operate profitably on long-distance hauling, truck drivers must maintain 40 or more miles an hour."

Transportation, in other words, was once a prominent item on the national agenda. No longer: not because it no longer matters to people, but because it no longer matters to visionaries—or to pundits or politicians or the *Times*.

Of course we still do have visionaries who care about technology. I've mentioned an interesting document by Dyson, Gilder, Keyworth, and Toffler: the contrast between their work and Geddes's is striking. They are concerned mainly to convince us that our future is disconnected from our present and past. "We constitute the final generation of an old civilization and, at the very same time, the first generation of a new one." We stand "between the dying Second Wave civilization and the emergent Third Wave civilization thundering in to take its place." If we're smart, we'll busy ourselves "repealing Second Wave laws and retiring Second Wave attitudes."

Geddes on the other hand lived in an age that had seen a far more dramatic technology-generated transformation than our own. The few decades before 1940 had seen the rise of the electric power, automobile, airplane, telephone, movie, radio, and phonograph industries; the development of X-rays and television, of nuclear physics and atom smashing. And yet Geddes announced no new waves. The Futurama, he wrote, was "a visual dramatization of a solution to the complex tangle of American roadways." He was concerned not about the vast rhythms of civilization but about how a housewife might shave half an hour off her weekly marketing trip. And perhaps the seeming un-grandeur of Geddes's vision explains its grandeur, explains why it meant so much to the everyday life of that time, explains in part why everyday life in that age kept getting better.

Here is what we might do.

First, appoint a New York City commissioner of technology. Give him a secretary and a small staff, a dozen young researchers at the outside. His job is to decide how technology can improve everyday city life, then design projects and push for them. His domain isn't just transportation. For example: how many paper-shuffling bureaucrats might be replaced by software that can make decisions on matters like "does this application meet those requirements?" Software that uses rules to diagnose routine problems and fix small errors is reliable and sophisticated as well. It might be time to *use* some of this technology.

The basic idea underlying public transportation in the software age ought to be: don't make passengers accommodate the schedule; make the schedule accommodate them.

Most of the projects the commissioner suggests would be developed privately with government cooperation; his job is to get the right people together. He knows city life and deal making. He's a showman; his department has almost no budget, but he talks up his projects endlessly and energetically to the mayor, the public, and the press. He gets people excited. Above all, he has a solid grasp of technology and its future, and of the city and its past. His first act on being sworn in is to hang portraits of Fiorello La Guardia and Robert Moses on his office wall.

Considering the last few decades of government initiatives, the idea of establishing a brand-new city agency is (admittedly) as appealing as redoing Central Park in pink Astroturf. But to reform and renew an area as complacent and brain-dead as public transportation in particular—and the application of technology to cities in general—someone needs to prowl the country speaking *for the people*. Some person backed by the unique authority of an elected government needs to lay it on the line to the nation's private companies and its technologists: *We are the people of New York City, and this is what we want. Hop to it.*

You would find such a person in the middle of a successful career in private industry. He would refuse even to consider the technology commissionership. The mayor's role then would include being inspired by La Guardia, who located the best people in the country and pursued them relentlessly until they joined his administration.

Second, give the technology commissioner a modest budget—around $5 million a year, say—to fund university research. In this way the commissioner acquires, if he plays his cards right, the most powerful research division of any city department in the world. He should fund good research, not just the establishment line; decide fast, without wasting time on protocol and endless review; and work closely with fundees. No pointless meetings, conferences, workshops, document filings; just pick up the phone or send e-mail. The results will astonish everyone. There are some awfully smart scientists and technologists in academia, many intensely frustrated and eager to talk sense to anyone willing to listen.

Third, stage another New York world's fair. A mere nostalgic throwback? *Of course!* But a great world's fair puts ideas into circulation, and there's nothing we need more today than a shot of ideas. Theme: Reconnecting Technology and Reality. Zones: Art, Technology, Industry. Where is Robert Moses when we need him?

The newly appointed commissioner of technology will just have to do. ●

A Whole Different Crop of Black Leaders

Tamar Jacoby

Some new, dynamic, independent black spokesmen, uneasily conservative, are finding listeners in the African-American community.

For over half a century, from Booker T. Washington's death in 1915 until Thomas Sowell's emergence in the late 1970s, the words "black" and "conservative" seemed almost to be opposites. Not until the eighties and early nineties did the drought of black conservatives gradually give way to a trickle as other intellectuals—Glenn Loury and Shelby Steele were the best known—followed Sowell out of the liberal camp, questioning age-old civil rights assumptions like the idea that government holds the answers to black problems. Like Sowell before them, these thinkers had to endure ostracism and hate mail as the price of their convictions: though they have recently met with accolades in the mainstream press, not one was embraced by his own community.

Now, rather abruptly, all of that seems to be changing. With both whites and blacks rethinking issues from welfare to affirmative action, the trickle is growing into something more substantial. A survey of cities across the country reveals a surprising number of emerging black spokesmen who are willing to question the old liberal vision. Not all embrace the c-word; not all are orthodox conservatives. But all are unhappy enough with the state of affairs in their community that they are willing to risk the label, long considered a virtual curse among African-Americans. "Pain makes you seek for new answers," explains 46-year-old magazine publisher Emanuel McLittle. "My wife and I are typical baby-boomer blacks. We got an education, got advanced degrees, had 2.3 kids and moved to the suburbs. But even black families like us cannot keep Johnny away from prison and drugs, can't stop Susan from having her second or third abortion. Even middle-class blacks are living in excruciating pain, and this is causing us to look for answers in places we never thought of looking before."

McLittle is part of a new generation of would-be black leaders urgently seeking fresh solutions. Thirty- and forty-something, mostly self-made members of the middle class, they cannot yet claim to speak for the majority of their community. Still, in their number and the vigor of their ideas, they pose a sharp challenge to the old guard. McLittle's magazine, *Destiny*, is one of half a dozen new black publications willing to call themselves conservative. Right-leaning blacks are also well represented in the army of radio talk-show hosts in nearly 20 cities, from Washington to Denver to Seattle. In November 1994, 27 black Republicans ran

© DAN WHITE

RON FREEMAN **is one of 27 black Republicans who ran for Congress in November.**

for Congress—nearly twice as many as in 1992. And several successful white Republican gubernatorial candidates received as much as 40 percent of the black vote, once considered to be 90 or even 95 percent die-hard Democrat. Most recently, this spring, with the subject of affirmative action dominating national TV, as often as not the chat-show debates pitted one black guest in favor against another firmly opposed.

The new black conservatives are anything but a uniform group. Though many of them know each other, publish each other's work, network at conferences, and sing each other's praises, their movement—if it can be called a movement—is emerging, ragtag and heterodox, from the grass roots. Like McLittle, most members have come to conservatism on highly personal paths: through a traditional religious upbringing, a disappointing flirtation with the civil rights movement, or an even more intimate experience, like 12-step recovery from drug addiction. In striking contrast with the earlier generation of dissenting black intellectuals—Loury, Steele, and others—McLittle's cohort shares a determination to translate its ideas into some kind of action, be it publishing, grassroots organizing, or working with troubled youth. Still, at this early stage, each activist's vision is slightly different, and even the most confident have more questions than answers about how to help their community. Not yet a real network, its ideology still not fully formed, what's bubbling up across the black community is best described as a conservative ferment. Full of ideas, bristling with energy, hungry for support—and sometimes awkward, naive, and in a little over their heads—the new generation of black conservatives is sure to be a force to reckon with in the coming decade.

So what exactly does conservatism mean to these young blacks?

'I was convinced that the notion that white people caused all our troubles was false. Then I realized it was a lie.'

For some, like Emanuel McLittle, it means mainly not liberal. The son of a Detroit auto worker, McLittle was by his own description "a typical angry black teen" who broke windows during the 1967 riots and dropped out of high school. It was by sheer accident that he finished his education: a nearby college where he worked as a security guard offered free tuition. He was in his late twenties, and by then a parole officer, when he began to question the civil rights orthodoxy he had been reared on.

Assigned to a halfway house for inmates awaiting release, McLittle interviewed his charges about why they had raped, robbed, or stolen. "One inmate after another," he recalls, "when we got down to brass tacks, it was the same. All my thinking, all that I had heard about why black men are in prison, turned out to be false." Expecting testimony about white racism, about the unfairness of the system and the lack of opportunity for poor blacks, McLittle instead heard stories of family violence. "'She hit me when I was a kid.' 'I was never loved.' 'There was sex when I was seven years old.' By the time I'd heard this from the eighth or ninth one, I was convinced that the notion that white people caused all our troubles was false. At first I thought what I had always believed was a mistake. Then I realized it was a lie. Pretty soon I wanted to know what other lies there were."

Even after this first revelation, McLittle did not rush to declare himself a conservative. Among blacks, he explains, "the word 'conservative' is like a detonator. It's something black people automatically respond against." In a community that has always perceived itself as the ultimate underdog, conservatives are seen as champions of privilege and power. After decades of divisive racial politics, they are also regarded as the allies of whites determined to resist change. If "conservative" isn't exactly a synonym for "racist," for many blacks it comes uncomfortably close. When McLittle started to ask questions about what he saw as black dependence and "the notion that white America owes black America," he was promptly branded an Uncle Tom. "My own family members looked at me with a jaundiced eye," he remembers. "It really burst the day I announced I was supporting Ronald Reagan. I'd never experienced anything like it. It was as if I smelled bad or something. I was suddenly and forever an outcast."

By then it was too late for McLittle to turn back. His moved away from the community that had spurned him, leaving the inner city of Detroit for a middle-class suburb of Lansing. Working as a psychological consultant, he began to publish a friends-only newsletter airing his newfound doubts. Thrilled by the chance finally to speak his mind, he took out a second mortgage on his house to turn the newsletter into a bimonthly magazine. Produced by McLittle and his wife on a desktop computer, *Destiny* began in 1990 with a circulation of 5,000. Even then McLittle hesitated to hoist the banner of conservatism: the magazine's logo defines its subject and audience as "the new black American mainstream."

But by the time he had been publishing for nine months, McLittle found himself, willy-nilly, in the middle of a polarized Right-Left battle over Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court. The August 1991 issue of *Destiny*, with Thomas on the cover, had a print run of 100,000 and was distributed in cities across the country. Though not all blacks who supported Thomas agreed with his views, for many the episode broke the taboo on dissenting from liberal orthodoxy, and it put McLittle and others on the map as rallying points for future dissidents.

With a national circulation of 20,000, *Destiny* bristles with the raw energy of the new black conservative movement, its innovativeness and its rough edges. Unafraid to take on the hoariest sacred cows, McLittle and his staff have denounced affirmative action, school desegregation, the NAACP, rap music, Afrocentric education, even the label African-American. Still a bit the confrontational ghetto kid, McLittle likes to be outrageous: one early issue of the magazine included a story defending Los Angeles police chief Daryl Gates. But on the whole, his middlebrow bimonthly is devoted to earnest and often painful questioning of the civil rights orthodoxy—an orthodoxy McLittle thinks has wreaked serious damage to the black psyche.

Sounding a key theme of the new black conservatism, the magazine takes a dim view of traditional civil rights leaders. "Black representation on Capitol Hill has all too often been too 'race conscious,'" one piece charges, "pulling the country toward greater political division. A different focus must emerge, [one] that looks for what is good for all constituents." Another article reports on "the civil rights tax" that Americans pay to support government lawyers in race-related litigation. Every issue includes news and profiles of other black dissidents: both the relatively well known, like GOP Congressman Gary L. Franks, and just-emerging figures like Chicagoan Lee Walker, who is preparing a public school curriculum on Booker T. Washington. Still other articles celebrate the success of ordinary blacks who have eschewed government help and what McLittle calls "the politics of victimization"—welfare mothers who've made good, happy two-parent families, entrepreneurs.

This personal focus is important to McLittle. "Political issues are a distraction," he says, "from personal, psychological issues—things that happen in our households." The problems of his community are "not about racism," he insists. "They are about deep emotional deficits. Our young men are growing up dysfunctional, and instead of trying to help them, we blame white people. We champion the problem and call it a virtue. If you're not angry or psychotic, you're denying your blackness."

This emphasis on the internal is a hallmark of the new black conservatives, particularly those—a significant number, though not all—whose politics grow out of their religion. Ron Freeman, one of the 25 black Republicans who ran unsuccessfully for Congress last November, came to conservatism the old-fashioned way, in a family that taught him traditional values. Freeman grew up poor as poor could be in the town of Booneville, Missouri. His mother worked in kitchens and took in laundry and, for a while when he was small, resorted to welfare. As a child, Freeman says, he was told he "would never amount to anything," that just because he was black he would be dead or in jail by the time he was 18. Now 34, when he looks back, he can think of 20 friends who ended up just that way.

What made the difference for him, he is convinced, was his mother, who above all was determined to get off and stay off welfare. She worked as many jobs as she could; she saved and taught her seven kids to work hard. Ron was eight years old when he decided he wanted to be a football player; by 12 he was playing with hefty 16- to 20-year-olds. It was a bruising business, he recalls, but he'd learned his mother's lesson of never giving up. His determination paid off in a Kansas

State College football scholarship. After college he played pro football for three years, then spent seven years as a Christian counselor for inner-city youth—the job he left to run for office.

Freeman's politics grow directly from his hard-times childhood. An ordained Christian minister, he is so devout he will not go to a "pagan" Halloween parade and is educating his four children at home, where they can pray as well as study. In his job as a counselor for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he worked in city schools organizing "huddle groups" for young athletes: bolstering them—with Bible study and simple attention—against peer pressure to take drugs and be promiscuous.

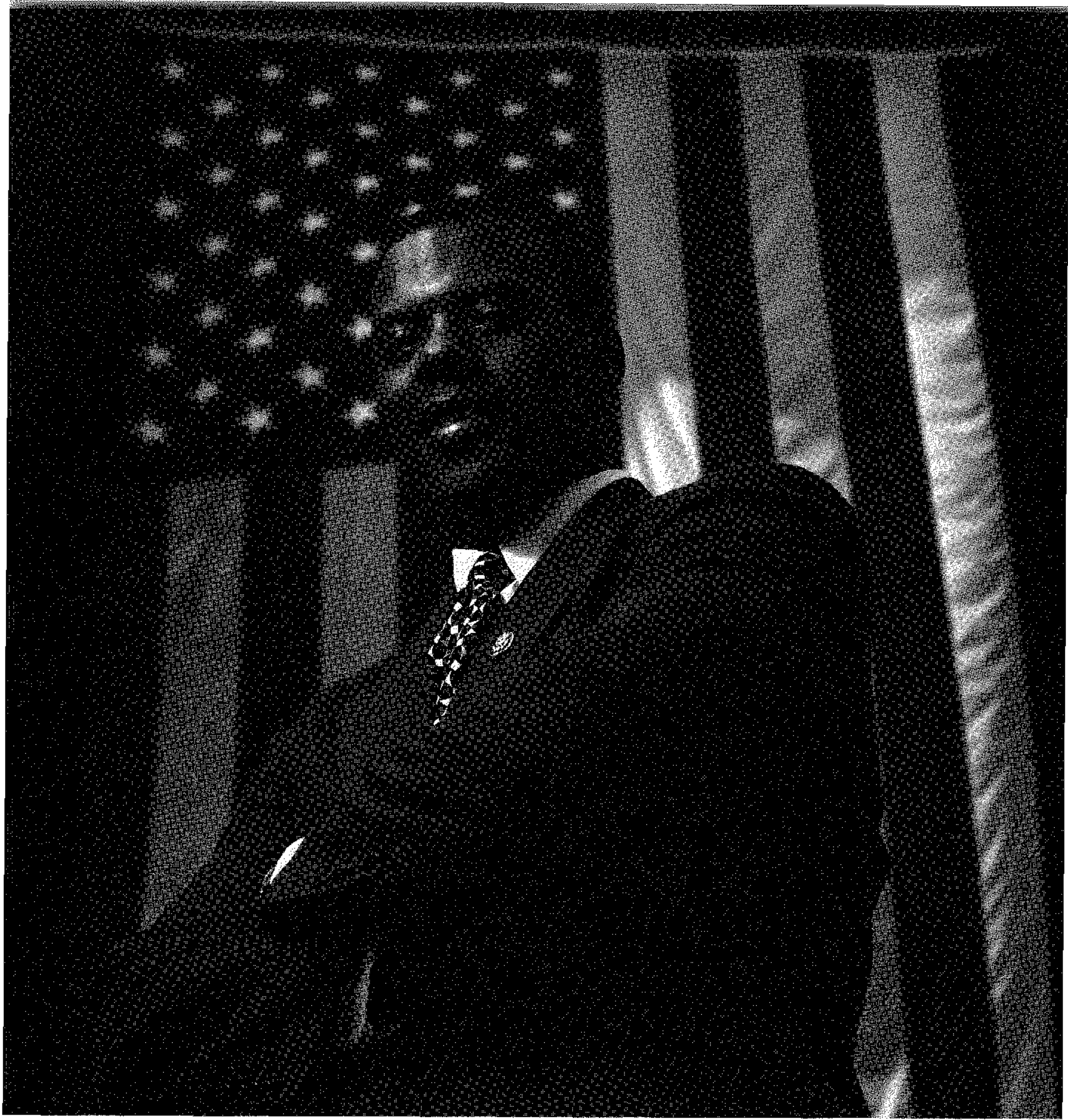
Dark-skinned and powerfully built, Freeman is the very definition of a role model: gentle, soft-spoken, concerned, and absolutely sure of his values. At the same time, anything but an ideologue, he is deeply wary of religious intolerance, and like many of the new black conservatives, he insists that his values came first—before any camps or labels. "This is what I believe to be right," he says quietly. "My views are conservative views, but they are commonsense views. Personal property, rewarding achievement, going to school and learning to respect your teacher. When you say it, people label you in this camp or that camp. But these are commonsense values held by a majority of black Americans."

The political lesson Freeman draws from these commonsense values is the essence of the new black conservatism. His diagnosis of what ails his community boils down to one word: dependency—dependency fostered by well-meaning liberals. Just recently, he recounts by way of illustration, he took his children to the county health clinic to be inoculated, and without even asking about his circumstances, the bureaucrat on duty suggested he apply for welfare. "Simply because we are black," Freeman says, still smarting and softly indignant. "I assume that's why, because there is no other reason."

Not a man for slogans or glib answers, Freeman knows that ending this dependency will not be easy—and he believes it would be "evil" to end welfare abruptly. Still, he is convinced that with a little push, even the most helpless blacks will find a way to free themselves. "If you have to be responsible for yourself," he maintains, "you find a way to do it. It's a simple matter of giving people an opportunity to do for themselves." The government can help by creating incentives: providing regulatory waivers for inner-city entrepreneurs, permitting welfare recipients to save money, rewarding two-parent families, and encouraging parents to start and run their own schools. The rest is up to the individual—as it was up to Freeman's mother.

Like many of the black Republicans who ran in November, Freeman is convinced this vision has a deep appeal for his community. Whether or not blacks accept the label, all these candidates say, at heart most are conservative. In fact, like most ordinary citizens—as opposed to intellectuals or politicians—black voters tend to hold mixed and inconsistent political views, with improbable contradictions among their beliefs.

Though blacks vote overwhelmingly Democratic, on many issues—particularly social issues—they lean heavily toward conservatism. On the death penalty, according to the Washington-based Joint Center for Political Studies, blacks tilt 48 to 42 percent in favor. (Gallup's number is even higher: 60 percent for—in marked contrast to congressional black Democrats, who are unanimously against.) On denying increased welfare payments to recipients who have more children, 58 percent of blacks approve. Among those who follow the debate on school choice, 88 percent support the idea. Roughly three-quarters back mandatory sentences for drug dealers, and 61 percent feel black leaders are too quick to cite racism as an excuse for black crime. As black GOP Congressman Gary L. Franks tells African-American audiences after a show of hands on these issues, "Congratulations! You're honorary Republicans." Even more striking, when the Joint Center polled blacks about their political identification, 34 percent described themselves as conservative, 32 percent as moderate, and only 29 percent as liberal.



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J.C. WATTS, a congressman from Oklahoma, is one of the GOP's new stars.

The one snag in the scenario concerns black views of the role of government. Whatever they think about social issues, on the question of the state as provider, blacks are extremely liberal. One recent *Wall Street Journal* poll, for example, found that more than two-thirds of blacks—compared with one-third of whites—feel that hands-on government programs are the answer for the ghetto. Still, Freeman and other black conservatives are convinced, blacks will eventually come around to their view on this issue too.

Though initially suspicious of Freeman's November platform, many Kansas City black groups ultimately warmed to him. Pundits as far away as Washington and New York were astonished to find him within sight of winning in a district that had voted Democratic for half a cen-

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BUSTER SOARIES, **formerly a top aide to Jesse Jackson, now sees the world differently.**

tury. Less than a week before the balloting, polls gave Freeman over 40 percent of the black vote, and he believes his defeat can be traced to a last-minute misinformation effort. (Voters were falsely told that they could not split their tickets.)

Still riding the momentum of the campaign, Freeman has raised more than $400,000 to fund a think tank and a grassroots lobbying group. Many of his supporters are white—as is much of the district where he ran—but by no means all of them are, and Freeman is determined to go on pressing his case in black precincts. "There is an audience for this message," he says. "I know there is. And change will have its own momentum. The people who break the cycle first will build and grow. Then the next wave. And pretty soon, instead of an angry generation waiting for government, you'll have a generation of free people who can take care of themselves."

Oklahoman J. C. Watts, who won his bid for Congress, is one of a tiny handful of blacks with a chance to translate this vision into policy. A country boy from the hamlet of Eufaula, Watts is the showy, national-network version of Ron Freeman. Also from a hardworking family with old-time values, also a football hero (quarterback for the University of Oklahoma) and an ordained minister, Watts is now one of the GOP's hot national stars. Robust and self-confident, with a bright, flashing smile, he has a natural politician's ease and rhetorical flourish. Elected from a district that is more than 90 percent white, he is at home among Oklahoma farmers as well as young black conservatives. He speaks regularly to black groups, plays a leading part in the Republican Party's minority outreach effort, and makes something of a specialty of poverty, crime, and welfare issues. His vision, too, is much like Freeman's, but it is formulated in sound bites that even Newt Gingrich could envy. Welfare is "sick" and "pathetic." To fix it, "reform is too gentle a word." As for liberalism, "Congress has for too long defined compassion by how many people are on food stamps and in public housing. I think we should measure compassion by how *few* people are on food stamps and in public housing." No wonder the party cannot showcase him enough now.

Tellingly, like many black conservatives, Watts plays the part—and he doesn't. His reluctance to sign on fully as the Republicans' Great Black Hope helps make him appealing to both whites and blacks. He does not like to be described as a black leader. "My message is one that transcends race and color," he says, "and I like it that way. I won't allow myself to be forced into being a black spokesman." Similarly, when it comes to ideology, like McLittle and Freeman and other black dissidents, Watts is still a little gun-shy about the conservative label. He makes no secret of his ambivalence toward the GOP, telling reporters pointedly that there is "a certain connotation" to being a black Republican—a connotation of which he is plainly wary. "They can't say J. C. Watts has danced to anybody's music except his own," he states, emphasizing that he learned the politics of self-reliance from his hardworking father, not some Republican operative.

It isn't hard to understand why these disclaimers would appeal to blacks, but in a subtle way they also reinforce the quality that makes Watts and other black conservatives attractive to white voters: their authenticity. Unlike Gingrich or even Kemp, Watts and Freeman know whereof they speak when they talk about poverty. They seem genuinely to care about the people whose welfare benefits they are cutting—and when they argue that reform is in recipients' best interest, their passion is convincing.

Not that Watts's chariness about the GOP stops him from participating in its revved-up efforts to court black voters. For Republicans and conservatives generally, the black community has long been an unexplored, untapped market—but as with all untapped markets, once it was discovered, there was no stopping the stampede. The party now sponsors two national groups that coordinate chapters in black communities. In addition, this spring it gave a much-publicized training seminar in Washington for black would-be congressional candidates. Watts's speech on "Building a Permanent Republican Majority" was a highlight. "If we remain true to our principles," he urged, "if we govern according to our convictions, by the end of the decade—just three more elections—there will be more black Republicans in Congress than black Democrats."

In addition to his party work, Watts helps a number of the not-for-profit conservative groups that have mobilized alongside the party's official outreach to woo blacks into the GOP orbit. One of the better known, Project 21, tries to get media attention for conservative black congressional aides and businessmen. The first clause of its recently issued "Contract with Black America" calls for a law endorsing Martin Luther King's vision of "a nation where people [are] judged not 'by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.'" Another clause asks Congress to investigate "how perverse incentives contained in government programs and regulations hurt those on the bottom rung of America's economic ladder."

What exactly do Watts and the GOP plan to do for black America? Watts's policy proposals can seem sketchy and unstructured—deliberately so. Like Freeman's and McLittle's, his is essentially a negative program: undo the effects of the past 30 years, they all suggest, and the black community will heal itself. The government can create incentives; it can, in Watts's words, "devise policies that will encourage rather than discourage." But at bottom, the conservatives' hopes rest on faith in black Americans—faith that left to themselves, they still have the strength and resilience to "renew their culture." "The city is filled with caged eagles ready to soar," Watts maintains. "We just need to give them the opportunity."

Programmatically, this means mainly cutting back. On the campaign trail and in Washington, Watts has pressed for cutting welfare (though supplementing it with job-training, day-care, and employer outreach), cutting capital-gains taxes (to spur investment in the inner city), and—perhaps most important—simply getting out of the way (no more promises that the government will take care of everything) so that old-time values can sprout again in the ghetto. Unlike some fellow conservatives, Watts doesn't spend much time attacking the liberal civil rights vision of government as answer to black victimization. "I don't have to," he says. "Its track record—or the lack of one—speaks for itself." And when the bureaucracy it has spawned falls away, as he is sure it will, he would not put much of anything in its place—little beyond moral exhortation.

Like McLittle and Freeman, Watts is convinced that the real answers to black problems are internal—a matter of personal change, not government programs. "I'm absolutely confident," he says, "that if we advocate family and church and community and responsibility and morality and education—if we advocate that over the next 30 years as fervently as we have advocated the idea that you need government to make it, then I guarantee you that within a few decades we will have created a 'Great Society.'" For millions of desperate people, this is a huge, fateful leap of faith. But for Watts and his fellow black conservatives, virtually nothing could be worse than the elaborate system of discouragement and disincentives in place now.

The Reverend Buster Soaries is just the kind of man Watts and other black Republicans hope will step in when the government gets out of the social welfare business. Pastor of one of the fastest-growing congregations in New Jersey, the 3,800-member First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, Soaries is part of a cohort of ministers taking the mantle of neighborhood change on their shoulders. A natural and ambitious showman with a revival-preacher's voice, the 44-year-old Soaries sees it as his role to harness congregants' spiritual energy for community needs.

Located just outside New Brunswick in the rubble of an obsolete industrial zone, Soaries's church has attracted millions of dollars and middle-class black help for a flagging ghetto enclave. Church members come from the neighborhood and beyond. They help each other—with volunteering, mentoring, organized neighbor-to-neighbor kindness—and they help themselves. Among church initiatives: a small alternative school for troubled youth, a networking and counseling service for unemployed congregants, and a "microloan" program to help local entrepreneurs qualify for capital. The church's nonprofit community development corporation—supported by Johnson & Johnson, AT&T, and other companies—will soon move into a $2 million headquarters, where it plans to offer job training, senior medical care, and small-business incubation services. "Black churches are the only hope," says Soaries, "the only way to address the pathology that plagues the black community."

Soaries's vision of what the church can do grows directly out of his disappointment with liberal activism. "A child of the sixties," as he puts it, he was a student leader who rose to be one of Jesse Jackson's top lieutenants at Operation PUSH. Already a magnetic speaker with a national reputation and a golden future, he had what he calls a revelation in 1975. "It was sparked by my father's death," says the disarmingly direct minister. "I looked around and saw that what we were doing was irrelevant. We had marched to change the way America treated people, and we had won, but nobody seemed to have noticed. We were already out of Egypt, but still living like Egyptians, still blaming Pharaoh. Drugs, crime, pathology, and loose morals were the dominant life-style in the community, undermining all the progress of the sixties. And we in the movement were still giving speeches blaming Nixon."

Determined to help in a more effective way, Soaries went back to school to be trained as a minister, deciding sometime in the 1980s that he didn't care what label people pinned on him. By 1990 he was leading a coalition of pastors for Clarence Thomas, and he still maintains good relations with Kemp, Gingrich, and black self-help guru Robert Woodson. Yet with his hands-on activism and intense moral focus, Soaries likes to distinguish himself from what he calls "generic conservatism" and its idea "that market forces can solve all the problems." For him the church is a kind of third way—the only institution around that can enforce some "Do nots" while also instilling hope for a better future.

How exactly do Soaries's church-based social programs differ from the ones the government might try in New Brunswick? Consider his work with at-risk youth. He started his church's alternative school a year ago after a fight at the local junior high school led to arrests and a racial protest by activists charging police mistreatment. Approached by parents, Soaries told them to look beyond the racial complaint and find out why their kids were getting into scrapes. He also intervened at the juvenile court and got the youths turned over to him instead of the criminal justice system. The school he established in the basement of the church provided intensive attention for 12 troubled boys: not just certified teachers but, for each kid, an after-school tutor, a psychologist-counselor, and a family-service worker—most of them church volunteers. The focus of the program was to teach skills but also, like Freeman's "huddle groups," to change attitudes: to prove to the youths that someone—indeed an entire community—cared, and to make each student accountable for his actions. "We must do something," says Soaries, "for this generation that doesn't seem willing to accept responsibility. It's understandable that the black community is better at fighting for rights than accepting responsibility. But we must teach these young people that they can't wait until racism disappears to achieve excellence."

'We were already out of Egypt, but still living like Egyptians, still blaming Pharaoh. Drugs, crime, pathology, and loose morals were the dominant life-style in the community.'

A year later all 12 of Soaries's troubled youths are back in regular school, and six have become honor students. During the summer the church kept them and 150 others off the streets with a program of field trips, sports, and workshops on drug abuse prevention. Still another youth program prods would-be gang members toward entrepreneurship. "We're trying to teach them they don't need to sell drugs to make money," says Soaries's aide Abbe Abboa-Offei. "We tell them, 'There's a way to make $100,000 a year by the time you're 30—legally. But you have to change your attitude, your dress. You have to get serious about your education and about yourself.'"

Unlike the government social services that black conservatives scorn, such programs work because the church knows the community. "Which kid is salvageable? Which struggling business could pay back a bank loan?" asks black thinker Glenn Loury. "These are discriminations that are beyond the ken of the bureaucracy." Soaries and his volunteers have moral authority and the capacity to induce shame in a world where both are in short supply. In Soaries's view, the church is one of the only forces that can inspire the ailing community to help itself. "Whether or not a person has hope, whether or not he is making plans for the future, whether or not a 16-year-old kid is buying his own casket—as they are doing in some communities—these are all spiritual issues, and they're at the heart of the crisis we're trying to address here."

Errol Smith moves in a very different world from Soaries, with a different set of problems from those that worry Watts or Freeman. Yet in his way Smith is preoccupied with exactly the same issues: responsibility, accountability, self-reliance, and achievement. Founder and chief executive of a $5-million-a-year contracting business, he belongs to a social class that hardly existed 20 years ago: the self-made black upper middle class. Just shy of 40, a native New Yorker turned Californian, he moves effortlessly among white clients, lives in a mixed suburb, flies an airplane for sport, and carries a cellular phone.

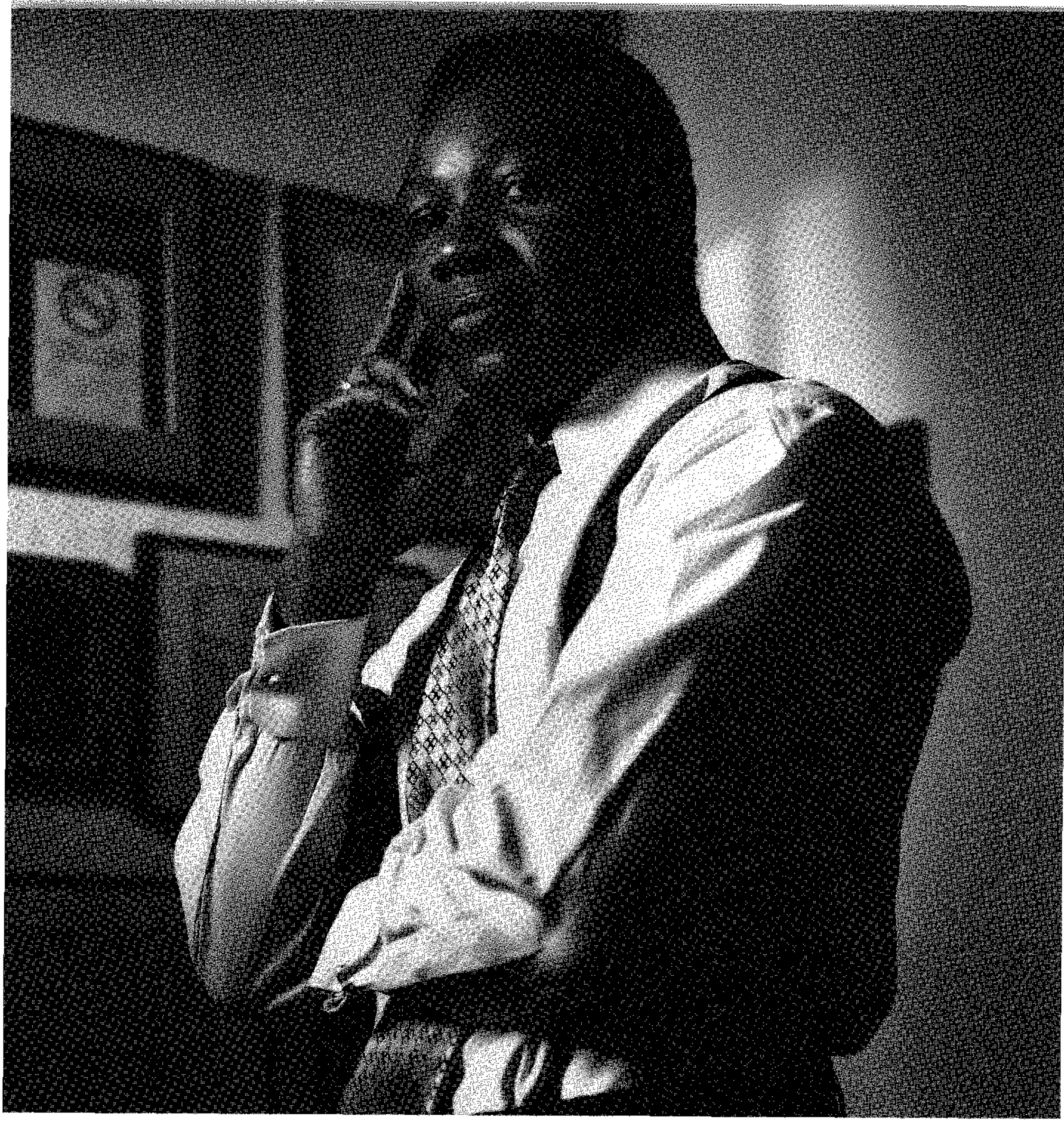
As a champion of individual effort, he looks to neither the government nor the church to solve blacks' problems. In his view, the answer lies in old-fashioned entrepreneurship and upward mobility. At the same time, Smith believes, many blacks must be taught—and prodded—to take advantage of the opportunities open to them. A well-known radio host and a major figure in the California battle over affirmative action (he's the only black on the advisory board behind the proposed ballot measure banning racial preferences), Smith has devoted himself to trying to clear away the obstacles—mostly attitudes and self-serving excuses—that seem to him to stand in the way for all too many young blacks.

Like Freeman and Watts, Smith is a model of the vision he advocates. Growing up poor, the son of Caribbean immigrants, he watched his father and uncles hold down two or three jobs to buy their own homes and put kids through college. "Never was I told," Smith says, "that by virtue of color I was starting out disadvantaged or in any way less well positioned to achieve the American Dream." By his own account he stumbled into business, and that, "more than anything," he says, "is what has shaped my view of this country. Merit and competence, whether I can get the job done—that's what matters in business, not the color of my skin." His firm, which brokers building-maintenance contracts, has over 500 accounts. "That's a huge number of businesses willing to trust me," he says proudly.

But Smith is brokenhearted when he looks around the city and sees how few other blacks are making it in his world. He tells of trying to raise money for minority business after the Los Angeles riots and coming on a Chinese banker who was willing to help. "He said he saw opportunity in the Latino community—saw money to be made there—and he said he would help a few blacks too, because the government was leaning on him. When he looked at blacks, what he saw was a liability and an obligation. What kind of an image is that for the world to have of us?"

The young blacks who concern Smith are apparently successful middle-class youths already navigating in an integrated world. Like McLittle and Soaries on the subject of ghetto youth, Smith talks about these upscale young people with mournful desperation. "I believe," he says, "that we've lost a generation. It's a tragedy—unimaginable." The culprit, in his view, is affirmative action, which he condemns in much the same terms used by critics of welfare dependency. "We've created an entire generation of Americans," he says, "who believe that if it were not for racial preferences, they would not be able to achieve. Affirmative action is a crutch, a narcotic. They have no faith in their ability to make it on their own. They equate 'taking responsibility' with 'letting white America off the hook.'"

Like many other black conservatives, Smith feels the answer is partly advocacy, partly hands-on work in the community. As an advocate at the center of the California fight over affirmative action, he writes op-ed pieces, appears on TV, and organizes other blacks who can carry the battle to the media. On the air, debating Jesse Jackson or California Assembly leader Willie Brown, the young-looking Smith is a soft-spoken but formidable adversary. He quotes Martin Luther King: "Social policy based on skin color is



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ERROL SMITH runs a radio talk show—and a $5 million-a-year business in Los Angeles.

'wrong, it's unjust, and it's evil.'" Off the air he adds, "All my friends and business partners are from different ethnic groups. I wouldn't know what to do in a world—the world we're headed for—where we have to break up into tribes."

At the same time, Smith believes the real changes needed are internal—and he sees it as his job to motivate people to make that kind of change in their own lives. "We've done as much legislatively as we can do," he says. "The last leg of the journey has to be achieved by merit and excellence and upward mobility."

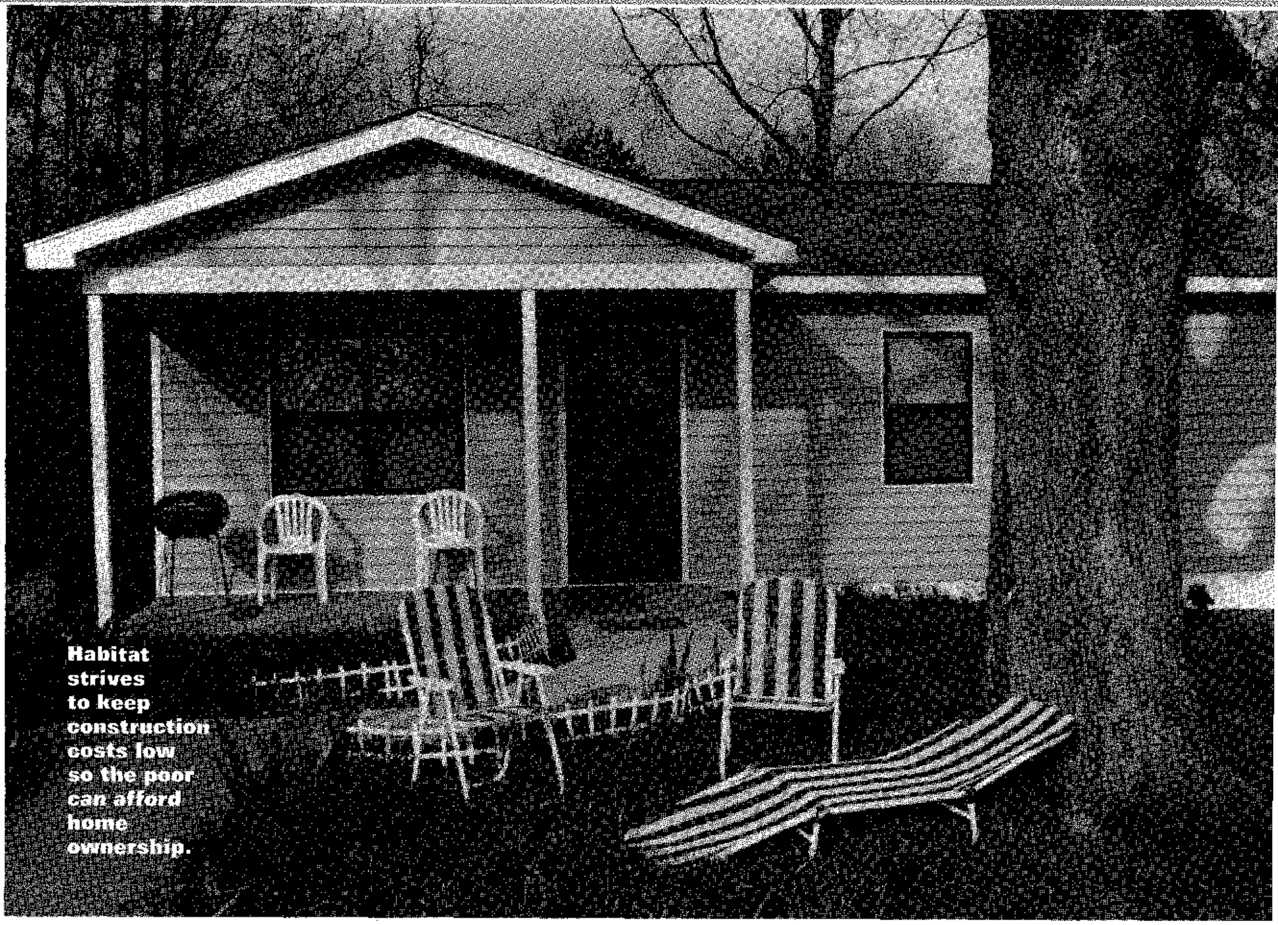
Accordingly, Smith has published a best-selling book of inspirational advice for black men, and he runs a mentoring program for young men, 25 to 40, already on the road to mainstream success—already participating in the business world, working in government, or on the edge of the professions. An upscale, secular version of Freeman's "huddle groups" and Soaries's basement school, the program provides a kind of advanced surrogate parenting. Smith meets with his protégés once a week and tries to pass on some of the lessons he found useful coming up: a short course in critical thinking, self-awareness, and the setting of goals. Sessions range from the personal (a hardheaded "self-assessment") to the political (a formal debate about affirmative action). The idea is to spur the young men to achieve but also to look beyond themselves: to get involved politically and to use their skills to aid others in the community. Several already have: organizing a shopping service for ghetto residents without access to supermarkets and putting together a theatrical "showcase" that will inspire youth to rethink their values. His first five graduates are already helping to provide the same counseling for 20 more young "leaders" like themselves. "It's a small step," says Smith, "but you have to start somewhere."

'We've done as much legislatively as we can do. The last leg of the journey has to be achieved by merit and excellence and upward mobility.'

What kind of following do the new black conservatives command? What kind of inroads are they making in their deeply alienated community? Even with extensive polling, it's hard to say. Critics point out that many of their supporters are white: some 40 percent of McLittle's readership, well over half of both Freeman's and Watts's districts, a good portion of Soaries's funders, and the lion's share of the voters behind Smith's ballot measure. In fact, this says little about the dissidents' appeal to blacks—though it speaks volumes about changes in white racial attitudes. And better-known black conservatives say the black political climate too is changing perceptibly. "People used to call me," says Shelby Steele, "and whisper into the telephone—they were so afraid of being overheard. But that reticence is changing. There's been a real shift in thinking. People are accepting that there's another side to things." Glenn Loury agrees: "There is more resonance now—a little more resonance, anyway—if only because reality is crashing in. The cities are going to hell in a handbasket; the Democratic Party is weak—so more people are interested in hedging their bets."

If nothing else, the center has shifted. Even a year ago it would have caused a minor sensation if a black celebrity considering politics had publicly flirted with conservatism. Yet in December, basketball superstar Charles Barkley did just that, spending a day in Washington with Clarence Thomas. The new black conservatives haven't yet inspired a mass following, but they are providing countless confused and worried blacks with a new vocabulary to talk about their problems.

Editor, counselor, congressman, minister, entrepreneur: like any new movement of young men with fresh ideas, the new black conservatives come on bright, brash, and can-do. Still, unlike white conservatives, at a certain point in the conversation, even the surest grow somber. Whatever path they've chosen, all agree that the old answers no longer work—and often add to the woes of a demoralized community. "We are not just one more Great Society program away from solving the problems of African-Americans," says Minnesota businessman Peter Bell, who founded the National Institute for Traditional Black Leadership to encourage more new conservative voices. Yet, if anything, the challenge the newcomers are taking on is much harder than the one the older generation struggled with. The old guard sought merely to change the world in which blacks lived; the new cohort is looking for inner change—in an entire generation. "How do you transform people, or enable them to transform themselves?" asks Shelby Steele. "I'm not sure anyone knows the answer to that question. At best, like the grassroots self-help groups, you save them one life at a time." ●



Habitat strives to keep construction costs low so the poor can afford home ownership.

CHRIS McGRANAHAN/HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL

It's Time to Take Habitat for Humanity Seriously

Howard Husock

Corny, yes; but Habitat might soon be the nation's biggest home builder—and its formula for housing the poor makes sense.

It is easy to dismiss an organization that calls itself Habitat for Humanity. Worse, those who dislike Jimmy Carter can be put off by his high-profile volunteer carpentry in Habitat's cause of building houses for the poor, not to mention the fact that he once dedicated a Habitat house in Nicaragua with Daniel Ortega. Those skeptical of avowedly Christian organizations will be dismayed by Habitat founder and president Millard Fuller, the onetime Montgomery, Alabama, lawyer and direct-mail entrepreneur who starts each workday at the group's Americus, Georgia, headquarters with a mass devotion and is given to citing a biblical basis for the organization's no-interest loans to its home-buying families. (They are "partners in God" being helped by "Jesus economics.") Those who believe government alone can provide funds at the level necessary to create housing for the poor will view Habitat's use of private donations and volunteer builders as naive. And anyone skeptical about hype will be put off by the organization's propensity for media events: "blitz-builds" and "Jimmy Carter workweeks," in which legions of volunteers put up small houses for needy families in as little as six hours. One blitz took place outside Miami's Joe Robbie Stadium as part of the Super Bowl festivities.

But anyone concerned with contemporary American housing and social policy ignores Habitat at his peril. At the least, the sheer magnitude of this undertaking demands it be taken seriously. "There is simply no way," observes Millard Fuller, his six-foot-four frame squeezed behind the desk in a makeshift modular office building at the sprawling Habitat headquarters complex, "that we will not be the Number 1 home builder in the U.S. within four years."

Do not bet against this possibility. Habitat is a $67-million-a-year enterprise, successfully raising funds both through direct mail and corporate and foundation solicitation. A sophisticated media department in the group's renovated brick headquarters on the main drag in Americus tracks press coverage. Habitat already has housebuilding chapters in over 1,100 American cities and towns, up from 350 in 1991; it has built 35,000 houses to date and is putting up 4,000 more a year, ranking it an estimated 14th among U.S. builders. Support comes not only from individual volunteers pounding nails and laying vinyl but from dozens of major national corporate sponsors such as Dow Chemical, Black & Decker, and Popeye's Chicken, which underwrite costs, donate tools and materials from storm doors and windows to foam insulation, and encourage their employees to volunteer their time. With 150 new local chapters opening a year, the possibility of building 10,000 homes annually—which would make Habitat (HFH to its insiders) the nation's top home builder—seems well within reach. Its goal of 20,000 homes built annually by the year 2000 is not out of the question. Habitat also operates abroad and is already the largest builder in such developing countries as Zaire and Malawi.

Anyone concerned with contemporary American housing and social policy ignores Habitat at his peril.

But it is not only for the sheer number of small, simple, low-cost new homes it is putting up that Habitat is noteworthy. Its methods are as notable as its product. It is, one might say, the Wal-Mart of American social policy. From its origins in the rural South it has spread nationwide, challenging a range of previous ways of doing business—in this case the business of housing the poor and improving poor neighborhoods. It has offered a new vision of what type of housing assistance should be offered those of modest means, emphasizing ownership, not subsidized rentals. It has a new vision, too, of how those who become its "partners" ("not clients or recipients," insists Fuller) are chosen. Need is a prerequisite but is not sufficient; screening by citizen boards, generally with close links to local churches, is also required. Finally, Habitat has shown that a nonprofit organization, combining volunteers as well as a professional staff, can succeed where government has largely failed in housing the poor—and in the process create a movement that is broadly and genuinely popular. More than 20,000 Americans now serve on local Habitat boards of directors. Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton are supporters—but so are Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich, who wears an HFH lapel pin.

Notwithstanding the involvement of Carter and the presence of some other liberal atmospherics, it's hard to avoid seeing the exponential growth of Habitat as anything but a socially conservative movement that has taken deep hold—and that aspires, plausibly, to spread much more widely. Although rural in its origins, Habitat has established beachheads in Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Newark, Oakland, and Phildelphia, and is poised to undertake an "urban initiative" to expand that reach even into New York. The city that invented U.S. public housing and has, more recently, spent as much as $100,000 per apartment to rehabilitate old buildings in bad neighborhoods—often giving priority to those with the most serious social problems—will find Habitat to be quite different in philosophy.

That philosophy is very much defined by Millard Fuller, the complex, 54-year-old east Alabaman who founded Habitat in 1976. One might think of him as a New South version of Jacob Riis, the journalist whose exposés about Lower East Side tenements in the 1890s began America's march toward public housing. Fuller, like Riis, was distressed by the contrast between wealth and poverty epitomized by housing conditions. He deplored the Southern version of the tenement: the shack, typically a one-room shanty, built of rough boards and roofed with corrugated metal, in which, Fuller recalls, black sharecroppers lived on his father's cotton farm in Lanett, Alabama, in the early 1940s. Fuller dreamed of ridding the world of such "poverty housing": the first of his four books about the Habitat philosophy is entitled *No More Shacks.*

As Fuller has described it, Habitat is the culmination of a very sixties-style cultural journey—from a comfortable life as a young entrepreneur to a search for meaning on a rural Georgia commune. It began when Fuller, a lanky, ambitious natural salesman, had established himself as a strikingly successful young lawyer and businessman in Montgomery, Alabama. While still a law student at the University of Alabama, Fuller and partner Morris Dees (an important figure in his own right who went on to found the influential, left-wing Southern Poverty Law Center) had established a series of businesses catering to student needs and supplying products for local organizations to sell in fund-raising drives. Fuller and Dees Enterprises continued to grow after the principals' graduation—to the point that Fuller had earned his first million by age 25.

Despite his success—with all the trappings of a big brick house, a new Lincoln Continental, a cabin at the lake, and 2,000 acres with cattle and horses—Fuller found that his marriage was floundering: his wife, Linda, then trying to finish college, was also raising their two preschool children largely on her own. "Millard came home for dinner," she recalls, "but that was about it. After he ate, it was right back to the office until 11 or midnight. I liked having the material things, but after a while they were a poor substitute for love and companionship." In 1965 his wife's abrupt retreat to New York and her threat to leave him for good prompted a crisis of faith in Fuller.

Beginning to question his single-minded pursuit of money, he found himself returning to the teachings about wealth, and about relations between rich and poor, that he had learned in his youth as an active churchgoer and church youth group member. He was drawn to the "social gospel"—the view, put forth by Walter Rauschenbush in 1907 and commonplace in mainline Protestantism ever since, that the church has a role to play in addressing social conditions around it. In recent years groups like the National Council of Churches and the U.S. Catholic Conference have often acted as if the social gospel called mainly for advocacy on behalf of expansive government social welfare programs. By contrast, Rauschenbush had emphasized personal, private efforts on behalf of the poor, such as the settlement house movement pioneered by social gospel devotee Jane Addams, who went to "settle" among the poor so as to broaden her own horizons as well as those of new immigrants.

At last Fuller came to doubt whether wealth and a Christian life could coexist at all. "The emptier a person is on the inside," as he more recently wrote, "the more that person needs on the outside to compensate." After a tearful reunion with his wife, Fuller decided to sell off his interests in his businesses and "give the money away."

He spent the next two years as a fund-raiser for Alabama's historically black Tougaloo College. Then he happened—fatefully—to visit Koinonia Farm, a rural utopian experiment near the small Georgia city of Americus. Established in 1942, Koinonia was a most untraditional place for the South; its avowedly interracial character had led to violent encounters with neighbors. With a characteristically Southern populist religious distrust for wealth, it sought to develop a cooperative, largely self-sufficient farm for both religious, altruistic whites and black former sharecroppers. Although the community had dwindled by the late sixties, it still cooperatively harvested fruits and pecans and sold them via mail order to a network of supporters. Perhaps it was the combination of religion and mail order that drew the Fullers. In 1968 they decided to move to Koinonia. It was there that Fuller's range of guises—from social gospel devotee to hardheaded mail-order empire builder—came together in the concept for Habitat for Humanity.

Koinonia's charismatic founder, pacifist Clarence Jordan, planted the seed of the idea. He had a dream of building several dozen simple homes, financed by interest-free mortgages, on the Koinonia grounds for neighbors then living in shacks. With Fuller's advice, Jordan established the Fund for Humanity and raised enough money through a direct-mail campaign to build 11 houses. After Jordan's death in 1969, the Fullers stayed on and supervised the building of the houses. In 1973 they went to Zaire for three years and built houses in rural villages. Upon their return Fuller decided to take the idea nationwide. "Is God glorified," Fuller wrote, "when a family builds for itself housing that is vastly in excess of what the legitimate needs are for that family? Or is God glorified more when a wealthy family exercises restraint, builds more modestly for its needs, and uses the excess funds to build additional modest houses for less fortunate families?"

In September 1976, Fuller founded Habitat for Humanity. The organization grew slowly, building 609 houses by the end of 1983. In 1984, showing the same drive and self-confidence that had made him such an accomplished entrepreneur, Fuller drove the eight miles from Habitat's headquarters in Americus to the nearby town of Plains, where he persuaded Jimmy Carter to lend his name and donate his time to a small, unknown regional organization—the turning point in Habitat's existence. Carter's participation in a most atypical Habitat event—the renovation of an apartment on Manhattan's Lower East Side—ignited the public interest in the previously obscure organization that sparked its phenomenal growth.

In devising the program, Fuller set out some inviolable ground rules: the houses must be well built but simple; they must be owned by the families who live in them; they must be built by both volunteers and the prospective owners themselves; the "partner" families must be screened by a "family selection committee" and must pay back a mortgage over 20 years, though Habitat would not charge interest. Finally, no government funds should go toward the actual construction—although Habitat does accept government land and subsidies for infrastructure projects.

Fuller argues that the conventional welfare-state approach to housing robs the poor of their dignity. "The idea had been for the government to do everything," he says. "First we gave them high-rises; then we just gave them money. They were nothing but clients, subjects. The people who devised these programs were people of good will. But they were basically saying, 'Here are a bunch of poor slobs who are barely human; let's just give them a few bedrooms and they'll be fine.'" Fuller's religiosity led him to believe, in contrast, that "because it is the greater blessing to give than to receive, recipients must also be allowed to give."

The Habitat ground rules are both traditional and revolutionary. In terms of housing policy, they represent a new way to supply decent housing at the lower end of the economic spectrum. Rather than using public funds, Fuller relies on the combination of modest size, volunteer labor, donated materials, and no-interest loans to lower costs to the poor.

In terms of social policy, Fuller's ground rules are just as significant. Habitat's screening of would-be home owners represents nothing less than a return to the nineteenth-century concept of the deserving poor, though Fuller would never use such language. His vision is truly that of a hand up, not a handout—the phrase Lyndon Johnson used to announce his War on Poverty. Habitat's assistance is meant to encourage and match the

KIMBERLY PRENDA/ HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL

Founder Millard Fuller, left, believes that screening would-be home owners is crucial to success.

efforts of those being helped, rather than to provide as an entitlement based simply on poverty. All this is in the great tradition of American charity—not just of the social gospel movement but also of the late nineteenth-century "scientific charity" movement, in which local private "charity organization societies" assessed the character of anyone who sought relief and required public service work in exchange, and of the settlement house movement as well, with its emphasis on the middle-class values of thrift and cleanliness, and its hope of offering a venue in which rich and poor could meet.

For a family to become a Habitat home owner, it must first agree to help build someone else's home, as well as to contribute labor to its own. The average requirement is 430 hours, or over ten full workweeks, per family. Willingness to match the labor of more affluent volunteers is by no means all that's asked of a partner family. It must be able to make a down payment of $100, as well as a monthly mortgage payment, often as low as $150 or $200, over a 20-year schedule. Most important, it must gain the approval of the local Habitat chapter's Family Selection Committee. The selection process is long and often difficult, say those who have served such committees. A family must establish need based on criteria ranging from lack of plumbing to overcrowding. (Habitat, setting its standards lower than HUD, does not consider two children sharing a bedroom to constitute overcrowding.) A family living in a shack, a broken-down mobile home, or a dangerous public housing project (notwithstanding the fact that its physical condition might be up to par) can qualify.

But need is not enough. A family must also pass what some local Habitat chapters explicitly label the criterion of "character." For example, West Virginia checks for the following traits:

"Steadiness: Family has not moved more than three times in the past ten years without good reason. Couple has been married at least one year.

"Care of Property: Living quarters were neat for interview. Family takes care of property and does not deface walls, break windows, etc.

"Interpersonal Relationships: Parents appear able to get along with others and would be an asset to a neighborhood. Children are well-behaved. Supervisor at work indicates family members get along with others."

In choosing its first 20 families, this chapter rejected 60 others. Habitat, moreover, continues to meet with partner families even after the house has been sold to them—both to help them deal with the responsibilities of home ownership and, if necessary, to remind them that if their payment does not arrive, they will lose their home. Cheryl Appline, the executive director of the Habitat chapter in poor, mostly black north-central Philadelphia, makes no apologies about the strict enforcement of mortgage payments. "We must bring people into the world of real economic life. This is no giveaway." The group encourages upward mobility too. After only three years a Habitat family may sell its home, sharing whatever profit it realizes with the local chapter. (In contrast, federally subsidized single-family homes built through the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit require 15 years residency before a renting family can even gain title to the home.)

Herein lies another revolutionary concept: a poor neighborhood can be a good neighborhood.

Habitat's emphasis on values and character in selecting its families is in sharp contrast to what might be called the entitlement view of assistance expressed in such works as Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's 1971 book *Regulating the Poor*—a view that had helped set the stage for the vast expansion of AFDC in the mid-sixties. In this view, the poor are an undifferentiated victim group, surplus labor manipulated by the American economic system. They are no different from the middle class except for their lack of money. Millard Fuller, in contrast, is not shy about saying that "Habitat homes are not for everyone." And though staff members are skittish about drawing attention to the character issue—they emphasize that the organization is ecumenical and complies with all fair housing laws (indeed, fully 56 percent of partner families are African-American)—they acknowledge that they target the working poor. Household income ranges from $10,000 to $21,000, meaning that Habitat home owners hold quite modest jobs. On a tour of Habitat houses in and around Charleston, West Virginia, I met owners who included a city garbage truck driver, a fast-food restaurant cook, a night-shift nursing home aide who also taught part-time at a Christian school, and a clerk at a convenience store. A Habitat census of its partner families reflects its emphasis on character: only a third of Habitat households consist of single-parent families. By contrast, 76 percent of public housing families nationwide are female headed.

Through its selectivity, Habitat has shown that it can be fiscally prudent to loan money to families of very modest means. Fully 89 percent of all Habitat families are completely current on their mortgage payments, a higher rate than for conventional mortgages. Even more impressive, since 1976 the organization's cumulative foreclosure rate has been less than 1 percent—a far better record than for federally subsidized programs for poor home owners, which in the late sixties and early seventies had foreclosure rates as high as 35 percent. Habitat's low foreclosure rate surely has much to do with the emotional stake families have in homes they've physically helped to build. Even Jimmy Carter, whose administration emphasized rent subsidies for the poor, recognizes that Habitat families develop a "new sense of pride, dignity, and determination. They feel they've accomplished something on their own."

The Habitat approach contrasts with that of the federal Community Reinvestment Act, which requires banks to make capital available to "underserved" neighborhoods, based on the presumption that worthy applicants had been denied credit because of their race or zip code. The law provides an incentive for lenders to make loans easy to get: banks want to impress regulators with the sheer volume of capital being loaned. But lending money indiscriminately is a poor investment for banks and for neighborhoods alike. Habitat, by contrast, uses legitimate criteria to distinguish between good and bad credit risks at the very low end of the market—without discriminating on illegitimate bases such as race. Helping families who can make a solid commitment to their community, and who carry that commitment out by repaying their loans, is a far better way to rebuild poor neighborhoods than pouring in capital indiscriminately.

Habitat builds mostly in poor neighborhoods as a practical matter. Since it needs to keep its costs as low as possible, Habitat mostly buys or receives land in areas where it's cheapest. Moreover, the organization has encountered opposition in affluent neighborhoods, fueled by the assumption that Habitat housing would be similar to public housing. "They envision a housing project, a giveaway program, problems with drugs," says Susan Sewell, a Habitat officer. "When they learn it's ownership, the anxiety level may go down." But because American neighborhoods are organized on the basis of social class, such opposition is inevitable. And it is not Habitat's goal to force the rich to live with the poor. "We don't believe in trying to go where we're not wanted," says Fuller. This, too, is a significant departure from government social policy of the past quarter-century, including a recent HUD program that attempts to disperse subsidized renters in affluent and working-class suburbs and earlier, quixotic efforts to build "scattered-site" subsidized housing in places like Forest Hills, Queens, and middle-class parts of Yonkers. Such policies have consistently inspired middle-class resentment because they reward lack of income rather than work.

Habitat offers the hope of building self-sustaining poor neighborhoods with a strong core of home owners. In Paterson, New Jersey, the local chapter has put up 44 single-family houses on vacant land in that city's North Side ghetto, in what a *New York Times* account calls "an effort to create an entire neighborhood." This is the pattern among urban affiliates. In Sandtown, an impoverished black neighborhood in Baltimore, as well as in north-central Philadelphia, local Habitat chapters have carved out specifically defined areas and begun the slow process of creating small outposts of owner-occupants within a desert of dilapidation. "Ownership is the only thing that stabilizes an area," observes Cheryl Appline, whose north-central Philadelphia chapter plans to build or renovate 50 new houses a year within an 18-square-block area. "Owners sweep the pavement and shovel the snow and ice. They have a commitment to the area. Rental is a revolving door with no incentive to take care of the property."

Herein lies another revolutionary concept: a poor neighborhood can be a good neighborhood. Just as in middle-class communities, committed owner-occupants can maintain their homes well and keep their yards and sidewalks clean, help police keep the neighborhood safe, and even help teachers make the schools work. The ideas of ownership and community cohesion are missing in the much-discussed community development corporations, commonly supported by government and foundations in inner cities, which emphasize the physical renovation of existing structures, often as subsidized rental apartments, without attending to the re-knitting of the social fabric that underlies any healthy neighborhood.

Despite its focus so far on rural towns and small cities, Habitat now aims to move in force into big cities—including New York, where its efforts to date have been pallid. In its recently announced "urban initiative," Habitat will have its national headquarters provide up to 70 percent of the funds for urban affiliates to build homes. (Ordinarily local chapters must raise construction funds on their own.) The urban initiative could direct millions of dollars to inner cities—and volunteer labor will stretch those funds further. Philadelphia's Appline boasts of more than 5,000 volunteers ready to help; she estimates their labor will reduce Habitat construction costs by 25 percent, saving her chapter some $290,000 over the next two years and allowing her to sell new two-story, three-bedroom row houses for $60,000.

Habitat's fund-raising is, in the tradition of Fuller and Dees Enterprises, well organized and high-powered. Recognizing that its good name makes it an effective vehicle for corporate sponsorship, it works hard to attract such sponsors by promising, for instance, to direct their contributions into metropolitan areas where they are making a marketing push or opening new branches. And it deftly capitalizes on the self-sacrificing image of Jimmy Carter, volunteer, to raise funds; Carter himself sits on the Habitat board of directors and personally solicits major donors.

None of this would matter, of course, if Habitat did not manage to build decent houses that the working poor can afford to buy. As the Wal-Mart of social policy, Habitat provides a Wal-Mart–type product—the housing equivalent of good, cheap, unfancy clothing. Typical Habitat homes are strikingly modest by contemporary American standards: 1,100- to 1,200-square-foot, two-bedroom houses valued at $50,000. Contributed labor and materials bring the cost down to an average of $35,000.

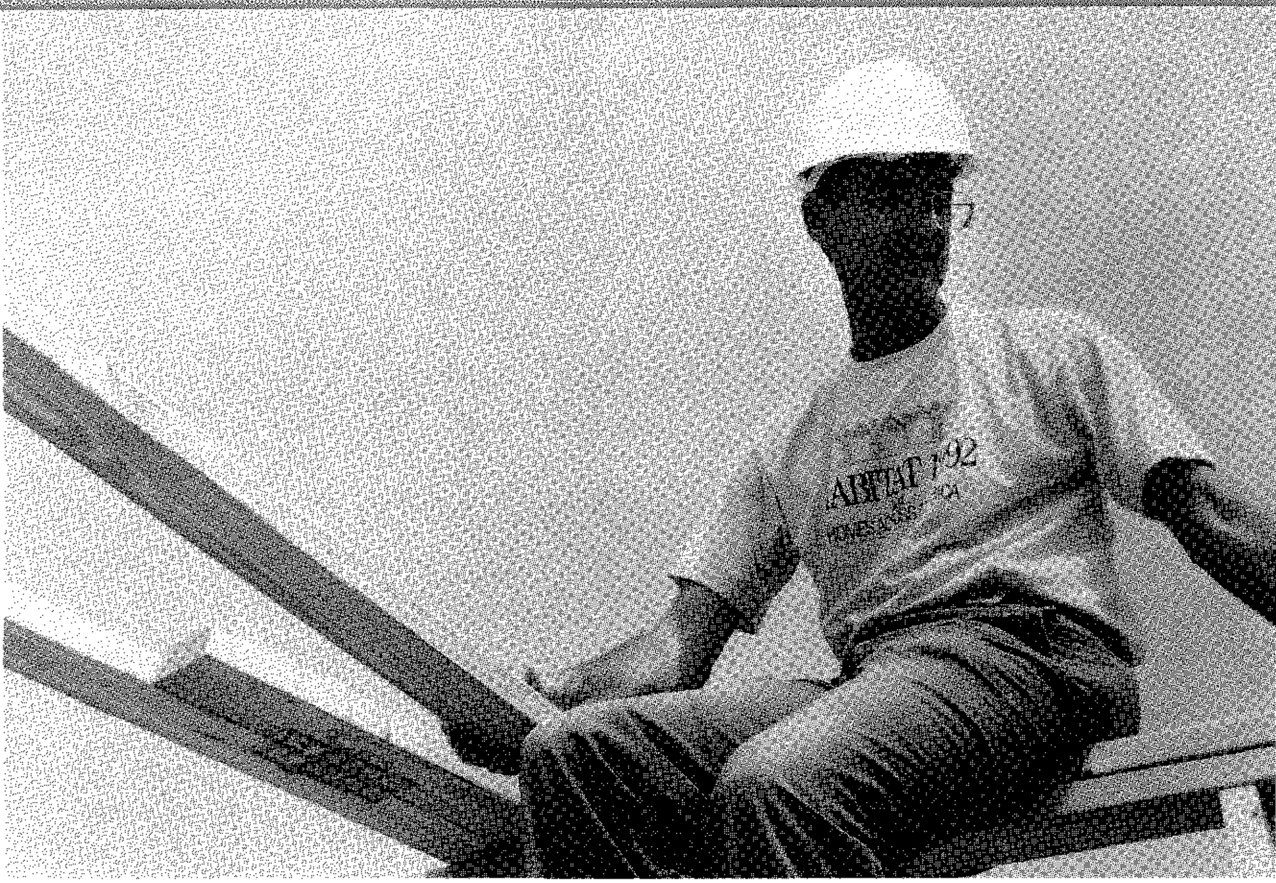
But local governments multiply obstacles to Habitat's efforts to create low-cost, rather than merely low-income, housing. Housing construction in America is highly regulated by building and zoning codes, which can add significantly to the cost of construction. Habitat is pushing local authorities to question whether their regulations are necessary. It has locked horns with local authorities in south Florida over how thick the plywood it uses must be. Local officials are calling for five-ply thickness, in the name of hurricane safety; Habitat wants to save $10 a sheet by using three-ply wood, being willing to tolerate what it views as a minimal safety risk in order to keep the house within its target range. With some success, Habitat has urged local governments to reduce the fees paid for permits—a small matter for middle-class housing but far more important for a low-cost builder. It is currently embroiled in a dispute in Los Angeles as to whether it must build carports attached to its homes. Habitat wants to provide uncovered parking pads rather than adding 25 percent to its costs to build what its officials call a "house for a car."

Habitat's success suggests several questions. Why couldn't such housing construction simply be handled by private, for-profit firms, in the manner of most consumer goods? Or, conversely, if Habitat has been so successful through reliance on private donations, might it be able to accomplish even more with direct government support? And if Habitat helps the working poor, what does it do for the truly needy, those earning less than it takes even to own a Habitat home?

Doubtless private builders, freed from the kind of code, fee, and zoning requirements that Habitat opposes, could produce more housing for the working poor. But these onerous regulations arose because Americans have been uncomfortable with the idea of privately supplied, very modest housing for the poor. It seems exploitative for a developer to profit by offering the poor cramped quarters without amenities, even if such housing is the first rung on the economic ladder. Habitat's emphasis on ownership makes the possibility of such upward mobility more real than does life in the rented shacks and tenements that give private low-income housing a bad name. Habitat's success in making the ownership of very modest housing the first step of upward mobility for many may spur localities across the country to revisit their zoning and building regulations, ultimately making it easier for responsible private-sector developers to build low-cost, low-income housing.

As for government funds, Habitat could not function as it does were it to take them. Building to federal standards for publicly supported housing would price its homes beyond the range of most partner families; subsidies would have to close the gap. Volunteers would not likely feel the same imperative if they believed that public funds could substitute for their labor. Still, government has helped Habitat indirectly, chiefly through the donation and preparation of land, and may be poised to do the same on a grander scale. A House subcommittee has approved $25 million in indirect federal aid to Habitat; Fuller is enthusiastic.

But such help would have its pitfalls. Although Habitat is scrupulous about conforming to fair housing laws, an infusion of federal funds would inevitably place a spotlight on the subtle and



JULIE A. LOPEZ/HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL

Founder Fuller built Habitat after deciding to give all of his money away.

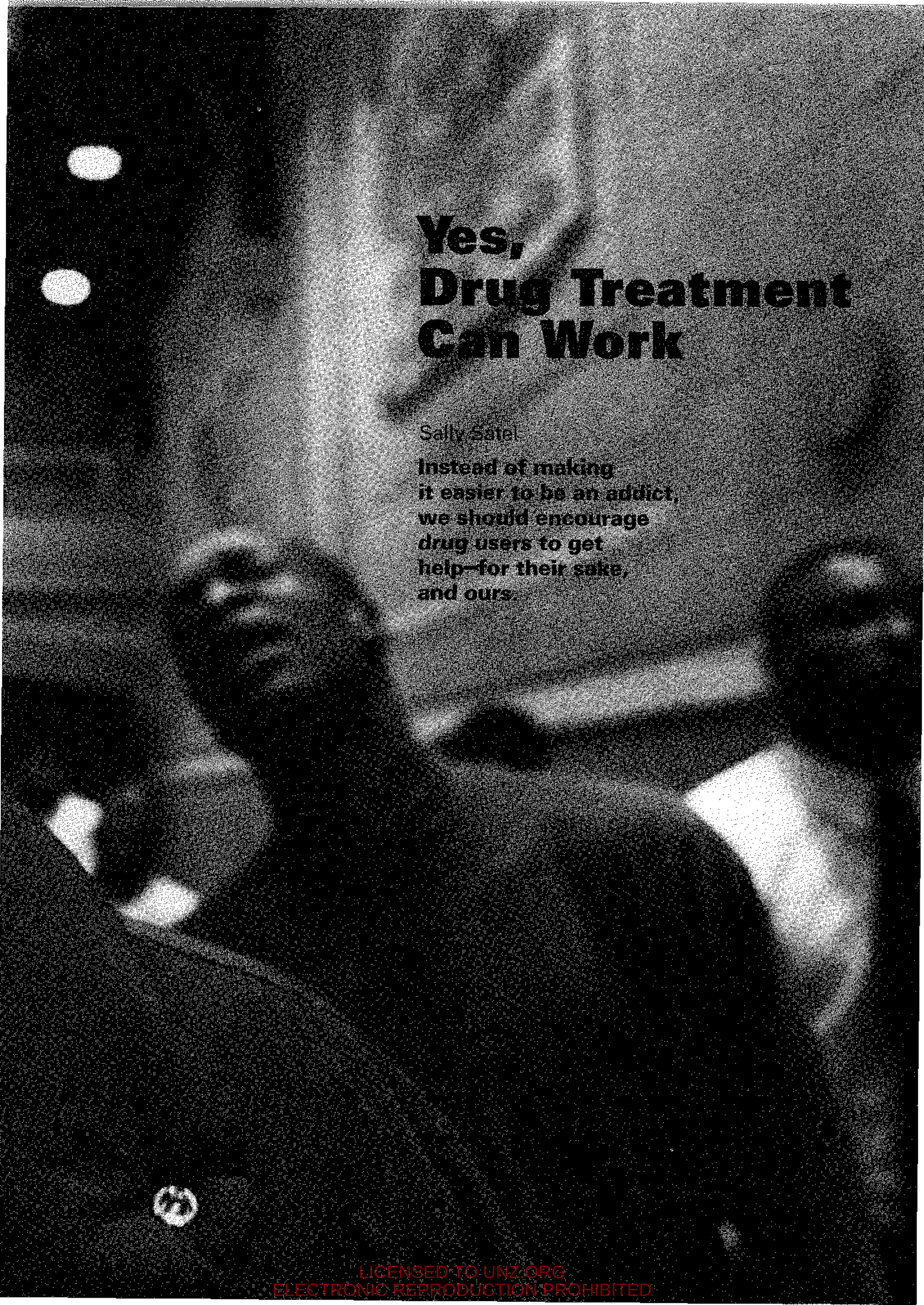
subjective nature of its family selection process, laden with middle-class values—which, along with its zeal for low-cost construction, is the key to the Habitat formula. It may be that government can no longer distinguish appropriate from inappropriate discrimination. What's more, even though it may seem that only government can fund large-scale growth, Habitat has already grown phenomenally through corporate donations and direct-mail solicitation alone.

"The trick," says Fuller of government aid, "is to dance close to the snake but not to get bit." So far, so good: and perhaps Habitat can accept indirect HUD aid and maintain its independence. But, Fuller concedes, "all it takes is one lawsuit, no matter how little justification there is to it, to really tie us up in knots." A lawsuit directed at the organization's family selection process would be catastrophic. It may be that government could help Habitat most by figuring out how to get out of its way. Large-scale public support may be a temptation that this organization would do best to resist.

Habitat must resist, too, the notion that unless it houses even the poorest, most troubled welfare recipients, it is not really helping the poor. If the tragedy of American public housing—where the physical plant is often the least of the problems—has proved anything, it is that improved physical accommodations are not enough to uplift those at the bottom of society. To enter the mainstream economy, the very poor must move by small increments upward—with respect to both jobs and housing. Habitat, by providing a lower rung on the home ownership ladder to people of very modest means, also serves as a beacon of hope for those who cannot yet afford its homes. From the point of view of the projects, a nearby well-functioning neighborhood of poor but hardworking owners is something worth aspiring to.

Millard Fuller's books are filled with stories of the lives that Habitat has touched. True, they can be saccharine, but they're worth keeping in mind. One woman Fuller met in a public housing project told him that in public housing, "I feel all throwed away." A Chicago woman, in contrast, said that as a Habitat owner, "I now know how to put on a doorknob. I can fix a hole in the wall. I am getting ready to return to school, and I am looking forward to starting a new job. My children can now see life from a different view. Habitat has given me hope. I won't stop here; I will continue to move forward."

So, let's hope, will Habitat for Humanity. ●



Yes, Drug Treatment Can Work

Sally Satel

Instead of making it easier to be an addict, we should encourage drug users to get help—for their sake, and ours.

Yes, Drug Treatment Can Work

Treating hard-core drug addiction often seems an exercise in futility. Eight years and $1 billion into a massive drug-treatment campaign, Governor Nelson Rockefeller conceded all-out failure. "Let's be frank," he said in 1973. "We have achieved very little permanent rehabilitation—and we have found no cure." Two decades later, volumes of published clinical evidence make it luminously clear that relapse to cocaine and heroin following treatment is the rule, not the exception, among hard-core addicts. Even the best treatment clinics typically see a majority of their patients drop out prior to finishing the program; of those who do complete treatment, between 50 and 70 percent relapse into addiction.

So why bother? First, because scientific studies demonstrate powerfully that, for society as a whole, drug treatment is a worthwhile investment. By reducing drug use, even temporarily, treatment programs diminish the social costs of addiction: health care, failure to work, and, chiefly, crime.

More important, under the right circumstances, treatment can bring about dramatic, permanent recovery. One form of drug treatment, the "therapeutic community"—a long-term residential program that aims at nothing less than remaking the individuals who enter it—has shown impressive success, reforming many addicts who complete the program.

The problem is that the circumstances seldom are right. In this matter, social policy has long had it backward. Since most addicts don't make it through the therapeutic community's long and strenuous program, what they need is some external incentive, sometimes even compulsion, to stay there until they complete the program. Instead, what they get is a host of welfare benefits that support their drug habit on the outside. A wise policy, by contrast, would press addicts to complete treatment and stop supporting those who don't. The success rate of treatment programs would soar.

The economic case for drug treatment's social utility—imperfect as existing treatment programs are—is surprisingly compelling. A 1993 Office of National Drug Control Policy review of the published research on treatment outcomes concluded overwhelmingly that addicts who receive treatment—even if they don't recover—impose considerably less financial burden on society. "The cost-benefit ratios were very impressive," says Dr. James Langenbucher of Rutgers University, the review's director. "The data show that for every $1 spent on treatment, between $2 and $7 are either averted in public health and criminal justice costs or gained in productivity related to resumed employment."

Photographs by Ulfson Arvidsson

The most persuasive studies of the more than 50 in the review painstakingly checked each patient's past criminal, medical, and employment records. They collected data from the years both before and after treatment, allowing two vital conclusions: that the changes observed after treatment truly were a result of the treatment, and that the benefits persisted after the patient completed or dropped out of treatment.

The largest and most comprehensive study evaluated a national sample of more than 10,000 addicts while they were in treatment and at intervals over the subsequent five years. It found that serious predatory crimes dropped by 50 percent or more over five years among patients who stayed in treatment longer than three months, saving society an estimated $1 to $4 for each $1 spent on treatment. Additional gains arose from higher employment and lower health care costs.

Examining the outcomes of three types of public programs, the study found that outpatient, clinic-based programs that offered between one and five hours a week of counseling or group therapy for up to a year saved an average of $2,600 per patient of total costs to society for the treatment period and for the year thereafter. Outpatient methadone treatment for heroin addicts saved $1,500. By contrast, long-term residential treatment for 18 to 24 months saved an impressive $6,000.

A 1994 California study of 1,900 addicts found that it wasn't necessary to complete an entire course of treatment to yield savings. Only about one-third of the patients stayed in treatment beyond three months. But even for the dropouts, each day of treatment yielded a financial return to society. In all, by treating 150,000 Californians at a cost of $200 million, the state saved an estimated $1.5 billion, largely due to reductions in crime, during treatment and in the first year afterward. (Since the study relied on patients' self-reports of criminal activity, it likely overestimates the savings.)

What kind of case can we make for drug treatment if we switch our perspective and look at drug users not in the aggregate but as individuals? Consider the issue from the standpoint of a mother whose son abuses drugs. By the time she seeks help, she is typically exhausted and desperate. She cares only that treatment salvages her child, not that it saves society money. Is her hope in treatment justified?

The answer depends on what type of treatment she seeks, for there are many, some much better than others. Outpatient counseling programs have a poor track record with hard-core addicts, who need a stricter clinical discipline than these programs are able to provide. A University of Pennsylvania analysis of 619 patients admitted to public outpatient treatment programs revealed that the typical weekly pattern of services consisted of one or two group therapy sessions, an educational session—meaning, usually, a film—and often, though not always, 20 minutes alone with a counselor. This is not, on the face of it, a life-transforming regimen.

'When I was doing drugs, I had a whole routine, almost a ritual. That's who I was—an addict. What do I do now?'

Most outpatient programs rely heavily on 12-step support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and employ counselors with no formal education beyond a high school diploma or two-year community college degree to provide the bulk of the treatment. New York lacks even a certification procedure for counselors. Many outpatient programs do not perform regular urine testing; those that do often fail to supervise the tests to ensure that addicts do not circumvent them by supplying someone else's clean urine.

Many experts advocate clinic-based methadone treatment for heroin addicts. But it is no panacea either, though it is appropriate for some addicts and has made an important public contribution by reducing drug-related crime and preventing transmission of infectious diseases like hepatitis and HIV. For many addicts, methadone shifts rather than solves the drug problem. Cocaine abuse is rampant among methadone recipients: Dr. Herbert Kleber of Columbia University's Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse estimates that up to 60 percent of New York City's methadone population would test positive for cocaine on any given day.

But one form of treatment holds out immense promise: the therapeutic community, best exemplified by New York–based Phoenix House. One of the nation's two largest residential drug-treatment organizations, Phoenix House has 2,000 patients in 16 residential facilities in New York, California, and New Jersey; 700 in two prison-based programs in upstate

New York; and, eventually, another 1,000 in two newly opened Texas prison-based facilities. The organization was founded in 1967 by psychiatrist Mitchell Rosenthal, still its president. It works because it starts with Rosenthal's clear-eyed recognition of what reforming a hard-core addict really involves: nothing less than resocializing him.

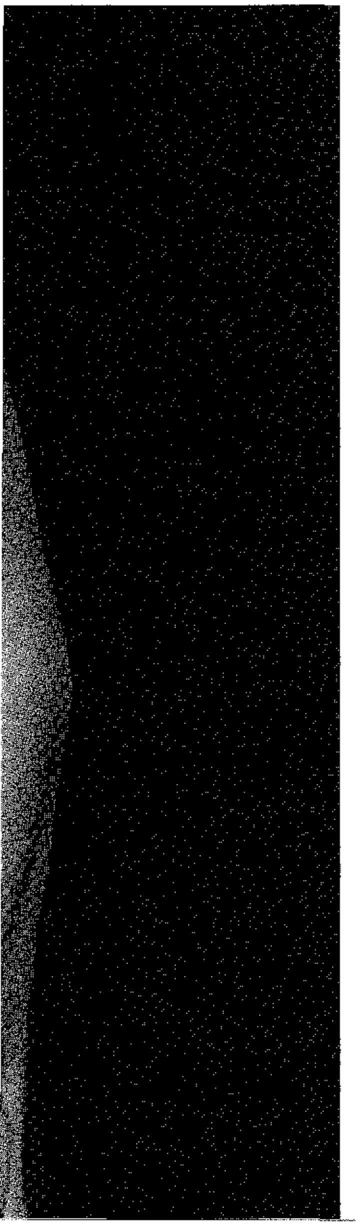
In a therapeutic community, patients are immersed in a comprehensive 18- to 24-month treatment regimen, built around the philosophy that the addict himself, not the drug, is the primary problem. Psychiatric orthodoxy holds that addiction is a discrete, self-contained "disease." The therapeutic community's approach, in contrast, recognizes that drug abuse is only a symptom of a deeper personal disturbance. Thus the strategy for rehabilitation is to transform the destructive patterns of feeling, thinking, and behavior that predispose an individual to use drugs.

The primary "therapist" is the community itself, including not only peers but also staff members, some of whom, graduates of such a program themselves, serve as role models. Mutual self-help is the dynamic: residents continually reinforce for each other the expectations and rules of the community. All residents must work, above all so that they learn to accept authority and supervision, vital to future success in the workforce. Residents win rewards for meeting the community's expectations: they earn privileges like weekend passes and take on increasing responsibility, culminating in leadership roles. If they defy the rules, they lose privileges and are required to perform the least desirable chores.

At first, patients often resist vigorously. Jack, a cocaine addict enrolled at Phoenix House, was accustomed to giving the orders when he was a high-level drug trafficker. He recoiled at taking an assignment from a more senior resident. But gradually he overcame his resistance as he saw that the "reliance system," as he called it, grew out of a culture of mutual respect. Soon after being admitted, Jack was paired with another resident, who was to be his personal mentor, confidant, and advocate. After a while, Jack himself was to serve as a mentor to a newly arrived resident. "I never had anyone depend on me because of what I, personally, could contribute. When I was selling, I had a function to perform. I was needed to do it, yeah; but if I got shot, they'd have someone to replace me the next morning."

During their treatment, residents must untangle the web of legal, occupational, and family problems in which they have enmeshed themselves over the years. Those who make it to the end typically have put their affairs in order and gotten a job. But in the early months of the program, residents are often disoriented, uncertain about how to act or feel, and lost as to how to express this confusion.

Juan, who recently quit using heroin, told his counselor, "When I was doing drugs, I had a whole routine, almost a ritual. I'd find my dealer two or three times a day, depending on the money I had. I'd shoot up, hang out about six hours, then do it again. That was my job. That's who I was—an addict. What do I do now?"



Residents of a church-run lower Manhattan drug treatment center

For heavy users the prospect of relinquishing their drug can be terrifying. Many addicts started using drugs during adolescence and never developed the skills to function without them. "It's hard for people like you to understand," one of my patients, a dropout from a therapeutic community, told me. "Even oxygen hurts my lungs unless I'm high. I don't know how to breathe, how to live. Heroin smooths everything out so I can bear it. If I killed myself, before I pulled the trigger, I'd pray that there are drugs in heaven."

Given the magnitude of change that therapeutic communities seek to bring about, 18 to 24 months of treatment isn't long. "It's only a fraction of the 21 years it normally takes to raise a person," Rosenthal says. "We have two years to teach industrial-strength values to those most likely to resist them—only two years to instill the social competence, self-respect, trust in other people, and optimism about the future that the addict's community and family did not."

Yet if a patient is able to last the two years in treatment, his chances for success are excellent. Among graduates of Phoenix House, the most extensively studied of the therapeutic community programs, 90 percent are still working and law-abiding five to seven years later, and 70 percent are completely drug-free.

Edward, 38, grew up in a working-class family in East New York. He started drinking and smoking marijuana at age 12; by 14 he was using barbiturates, amphetamines, and LSD. At 18 he moved in with a girlfriend, with whom he got high regularly. He bounced from job to job; he had two children with his girlfriend. At age 26 he took up heroin, which he used until he entered Phoenix House four years later. He worked his way up in the program, becoming head cook and head of education, and then took an outside job as a carpenter. Today he has a steady job for a Queens manufacturing concern, and he coaches Phoenix House's softball team.

Like virtually all drug-treatment programs, therapeutic communities have a high dropout rate—not surprisingly, given the intensity of the regimen. At Phoenix House, 30 percent of residents drop out within the first six weeks, about half make it through the first year, and only one in four or five finishes. This is much higher than the 10 percent completion rate that is average for therapeutic communities.

The challenge, clearly, is to improve the likelihood that patients will stay with the program. Doing so requires recognizing a fact as simple as it is surprising: treatment is more likely to succeed if it isn't voluntary. An addict who is court-ordered to treatment is much more likely to graduate than an addict who signs himself in, though no particular psychological profile can forecast who will leave treatment early. More striking, once back in the community, court-ordered addicts also do as well as graduates who voluntarily enroll.

"It's a myth that an addict has to want to change in order for treatment to have an impact," says Dr. Langenbucher of Rutgers. Adds Mitchell Rosenthal: "A lot of our most successful residents come in here kicking and screaming, but over time they acquire a desire to change." Along with the 700 patients in its New York State prison-based programs, some 10 percent of Phoenix House's 2,000 residential patients are involuntarily enrolled.

Criminal courts, ideally suited to identify drug users and enforce long-term treatment, are a key point of entry to residential programs. With the criminal justice system picking up the tab—$17,000 a year in New York City—an addict can't be refused a bed for lack of funds, as often happens to Medicaid recipients, whose coverage does not include residential treatment. "I wish the cops could bust addicts for jaywalking or littering," says a clinic director, only half-jokingly. "At least they could get a treatment bed, and, even better, the court would make sure that they complete the program."

Courts also have the capacity to track addicts and require urine tests as a condition of parole long after treatment is over, pressuring them to remain drug-free. Though today such tracking isn't routine, many treatment experts would like it to be.

To improve the overall efficiency of the nation's drug-treatment effort, experts also want criminal justice agencies to hold programs accountable for their results. When a judge sends an offender to a facility like Phoenix House, he can be sure that the quality of care is high. But drug courts typically send offenders to less expensive outpatient programs, where outcomes can vary dramatically. Miami's drug court program, for example, is notorious for its reported ultrashort stays in treatment, incompetent staff, and drug use and prostitution at its treatment centers. According to a 1994 *Miami Herald* report, felons were thrilled to be sent to "treatment," which allows them to live on the outside, visiting a clinic several times a week for a few months instead of spending years in prison.

Washington, D.C., by contrast, gets good reviews for its drug court experiment. Even though virtually all participants receive outpatient therapy, the compliance rate is high, according to program director Jay Carver, because the court subjects participants to tight surveillance, including daily urine testing, with immediate jail time for positive results. Urban Institute researchers plan to analyze the success of the treatment itself once enough participants have completed it.

If done right, compulsory treatment through the criminal justice system is also a promising strategy for reducing crime. Studies show that methadone patients are five times as likely to commit crimes when they are using heroin as when they are not. Patients in therapeutic communities, of course, are off the streets entirely and therefore commit virtually no crimes.

But it shouldn't take a felony charge to make an addict eligible for mandated long-term treatment. Most states allow the seriously mentally ill to be committed to an institution if their illness leads to profound self-neglect, a condition called "grave disability." (See "Treating Insanity Reasonably," *City Journal*, Winter 1995.) Although addicts are not covered by the same laws, heavy drug use can be gravely disabling as well. Hard-core users are often malnourished, exposed to the elements, sick, and physically traumatized. They can be paranoid and aggressive when using cocaine, then suicidal when it wears off. They are as impervious to reason as any deluded schizophrenic. Though not clinically psychotic, they have lost the ability to make free choices, subjugating all needs, desires, and responsibilities to the drug.

Many states have laws on the books permitting commitment of addicts when doctors, friends, or family members petition the court with evidence that the user is out of control and spiraling downward. But these laws have not been widely used for the past 20 or 30 years.

'A lot of our most successful residents come in here kicking and screaming, but over time they acquire a desire to change.'

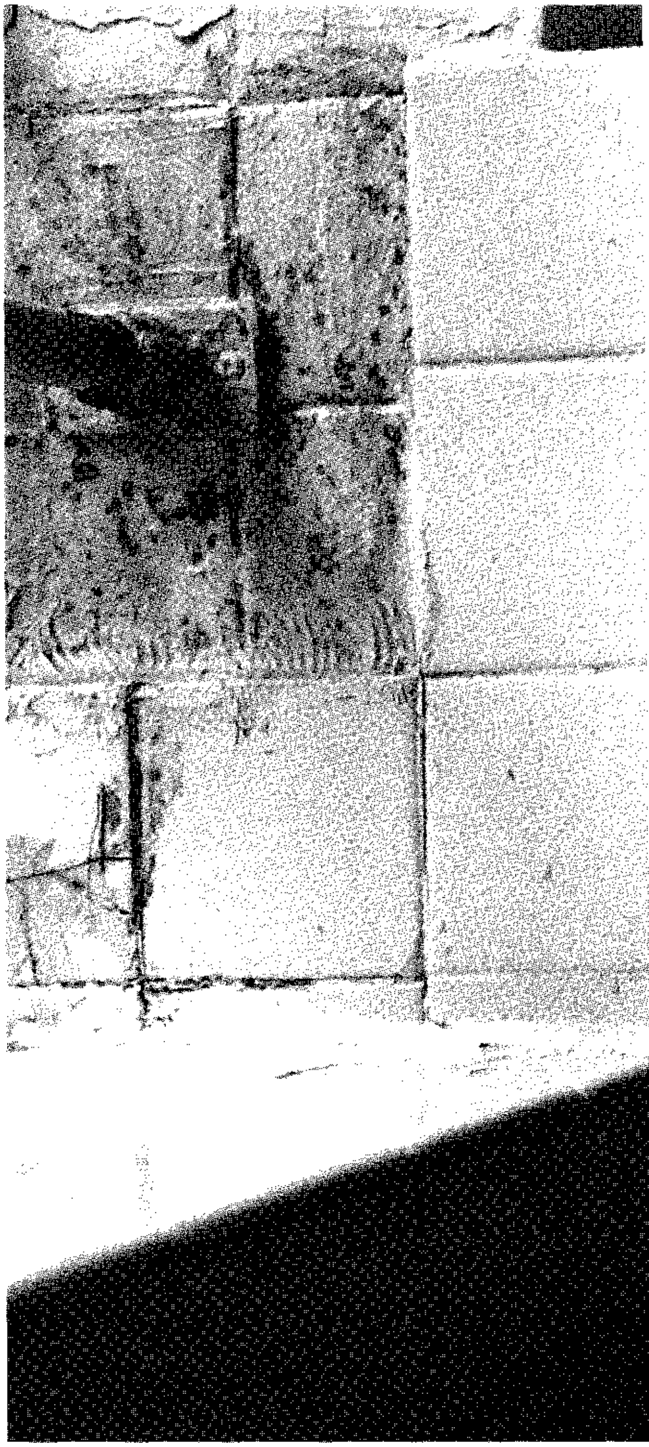
New York's law was repealed in response to the failure of the Narcotics Addiction Control Commission. Established in 1966, the commission had the power to compel non-offender addicts into long-term residential treatment for up to three years. The state spent about $1 billion and created 4,000 new treatment beds. The program failed because it took a punitive rather than therapeutic approach: treatment facilities resembled prisons and were run by corrections officers, not clinicians. When Governor Rockefeller began dismantling the program in 1973, he mistakenly concluded that compulsory care was a hopeless enterprise.

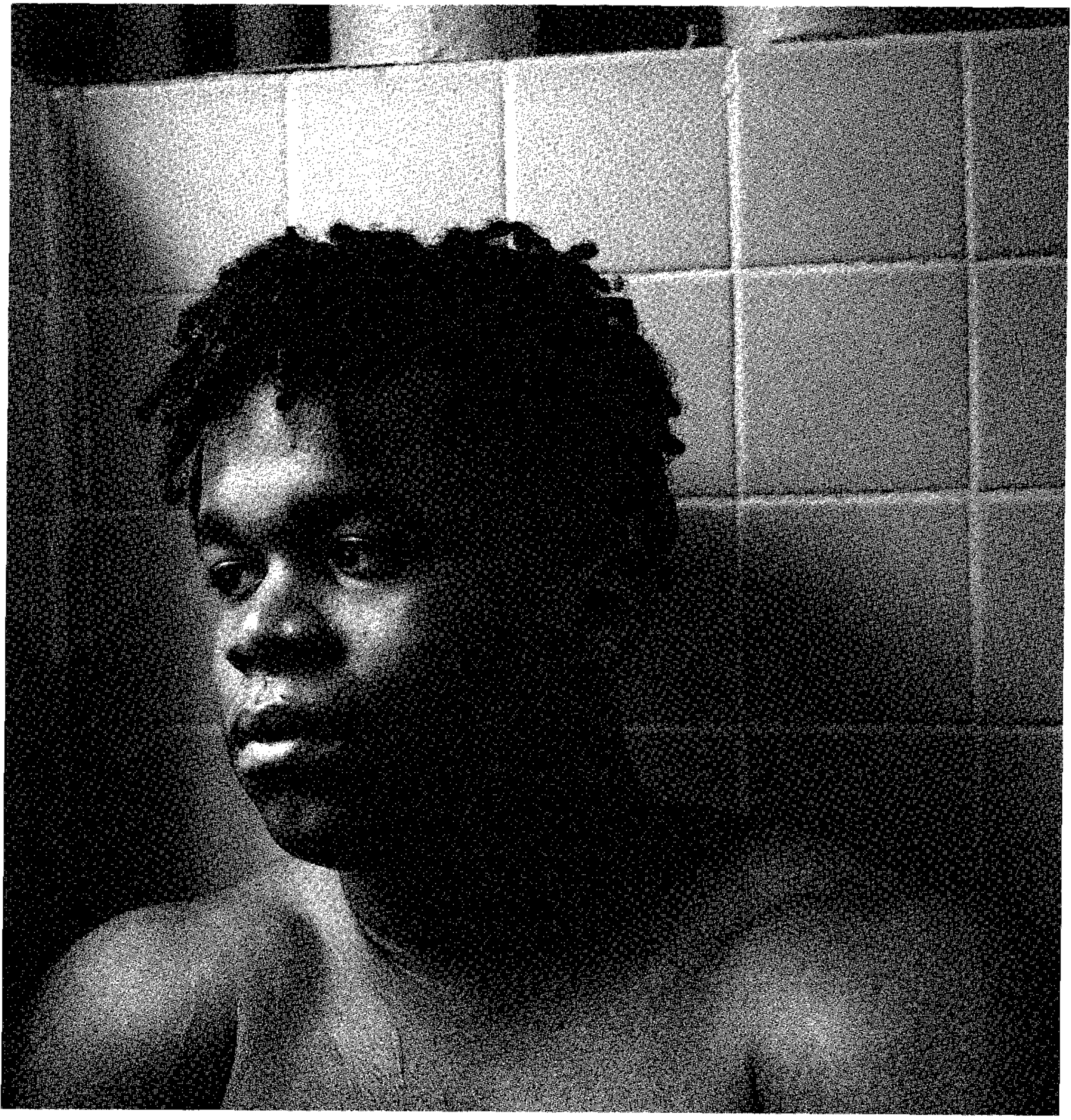
By contrast, California has had a civil commitment program since 1962. During its most active years, until the early seventies, the program was impressively successful. It required addicts to be treated in a residential setting for two years and then closely supervised by specially trained parole officers for another five years. These officers had small caseloads, performed weekly urine tests, and had the authority to return individuals to forced treatment if they resumed drug use.

This success came after a difficult start. During the program's first 18 months, many California judges, unfamiliar with the new procedures, released patients on a writ of habeas corpus almost immediately after they'd been committed. This judicial blundering, however, proved a boon to UCLA social scientists, who were able to conduct an extensive evaluation of nearly 1,000 addicts, comparing those who received compulsory treatment with those who were mistakenly freed. The two groups were otherwise comparable with respect to drug use and demographics. The researchers found that addicts who were committed fared significantly better: although 22 percent of them reverted to heroin use and a like proportion to crime, this was less than half the rate for the prematurely released group.

California's civil commitment program has become moribund, though the law is still on the books. In New York State, where civil libertarians wield great political clout, legal provisions for commitment are virtually useless. In 1994 the State Legislature passed a law allowing emergency treatment for patients who are incapacitated by alcohol or drugs. Under the new law, hospitals may retain such individuals for up to 48 hours against their will. Such an immediate response may well be lifesaving, but it does nothing to reduce drug abuse. Emergency care is expensive, and the law puts addicts who require sustained treatment back on the street, where they resume their self-destructive behavior—sometimes within hours, returning to the emergency room before the shift is over.

The idea of compulsory treatment for gravely disabled addicts draws misguided opposition not only from civil libertarians, who believe that unless someone poses an acute, imminent





danger any restriction on personal liberty is unacceptable, but also from some conservatives, who regard treatment as coddling. Addicts in a therapeutic community, however, do not feel coddled: a residential program with constricted freedom, rigorous rules, and enforced separation from drugs is the last place most addicts want to find themselves, at least initially. This helps explain why so many addicts drop out and why some prefer prison over treatment when offered the choice in drug court.

Long-term residential treatment beds are in extremely short supply. Nationwide there are 12,000 beds (15 percent of them operated by Phoenix House) and 2.7 million hard-core drug users, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The figures for New York State, according to its Office of Substance Abuse Services, are 6,982 beds and 623,800 "regular and heavy" drug users.

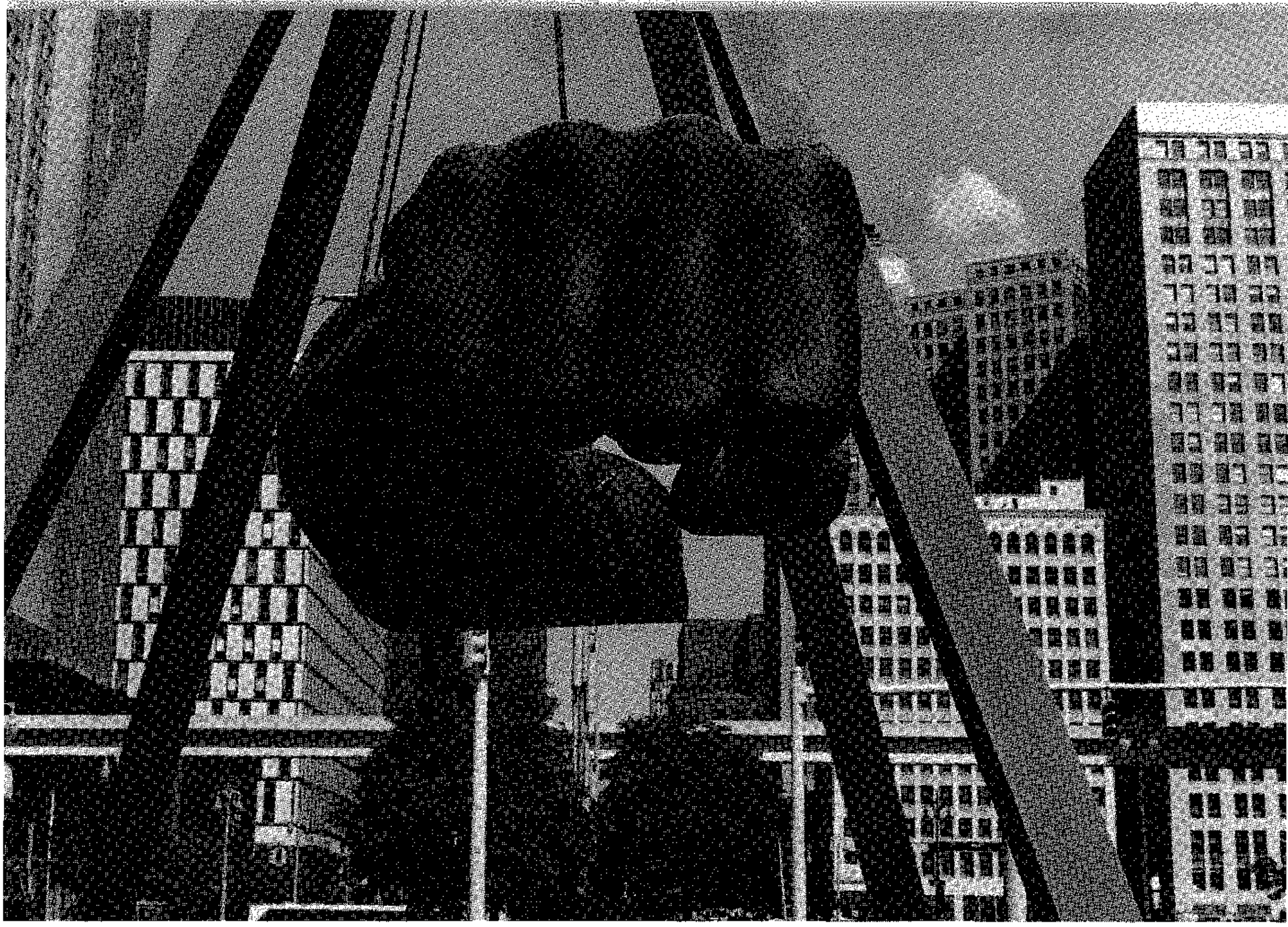
Every missed opportunity to treat a hard-core drug addict means more street crime, HIV transmission, welfare dependency, and misery for addicts and their families.

Even so, waiting lists for the few existing long-term residential beds in New York State are short, in part because Medicaid does not cover residential treatment, but also because most addicts find such programs an unattractive alternative. Not only is life in a therapeutic community hard at first, but government welfare programs make life on drugs far easier, "enabling" addicts by supporting them in a destructive life-style.

The federal government provides cash subsidies to addicts through the Supplemental Security Income disability program. (See "Welfare's Next Vietnam," *City Journal*, Winter 1995.) Although addicts who receive SSI are supposed to enroll in treatment, this requirement has rarely been enforced. Little wonder that only 1 percent of the 20,000 enrolled in SSI for addiction in 1990 had recovered and left the rolls four years later. Congress is currently considering making addicts ineligible for cash benefits under SSI. Some residential treatment programs arrange with their patients to receive their monthly SSI payment, as well as other welfare benefits, to defray the cost of treatment. This useful practice should not be at the patient's option: the Social Security Administration should put teeth in SSI's treatment requirement by disbursing SSI only to treatment programs rather than to addicts themselves.

The federal Fair Housing Act defines addiction as a protected disability, prohibiting local housing authorities from directly inquiring into drug activity of applicants for public housing or Section 8 rent vouchers. In 1994, however, the New York City Housing Authority began working around this perverse constraint by initiating aggressive new screening procedures, including criminal background checks, visits to an applicant's current residence, and interviews with his neighbors and landlord. The authority rejected one in four public housing applicants in 1994, including active drug addicts who would have easily received apartments under the much more permissive Dinkins administration. Congress should amend the Fair Housing Act to exclude addicts from its protection.

Every missed opportunity to treat a hard-core drug addict means more street crime, HIV transmission, welfare dependency, and misery for addicts and their families. Cost-benefit analyses show that treatment is most assuredly worth it for society. But in order to help addicts themselves, we must kick government props like welfare and subsidized housing out from under drug abusers and provide long-term residential treatment—against their will if necessary—to give them a real hope of recovery. Over time, such actions could help reclaim—for society and for themselves—the thousands now lost to drug addiction. •



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Detroit Fights Back

Julia Vitullo-Martin

Down and nearly out, the Motor City now looks poised for a comeback under its business-friendly new mayor.

No American city ever fell as far or as fast as Detroit.

Strategically sited on a strait connecting two Great Lakes and joining the United States to Canada, Detroit flourished for 250 years as a center of manufacturing, shipping, trading, and smuggling. But crashing from its mid-century pinnacle as the arsenal of democracy and the nation's industrial capital, Detroit has now dwindled into a place of unemployment and decay, a museum of all that is wrong with urban America. In 1950 Detroit built half of the world's cars; by 1990 it was making one car in a thousand. The fourth biggest U.S. city in 1942, it fell to ninth in 1992.

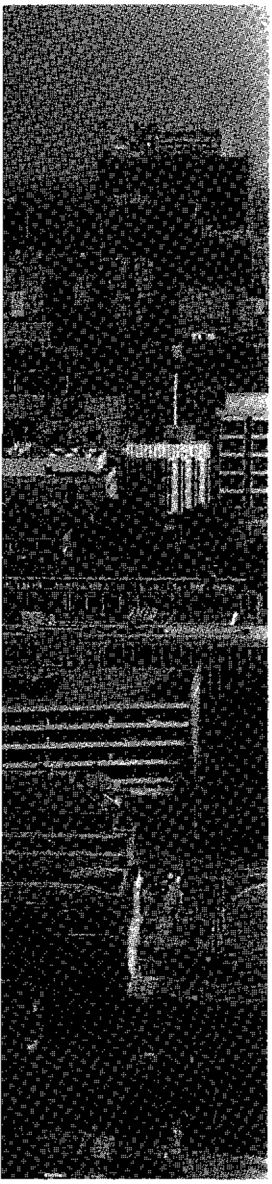
Today entire sections of the city are wasteland, with once lovely residential neighborhoods burned and vandalized into rubble, once thriving industrial areas abandoned, polluted, and derelict, and dozens of flamboyant downtown Art Deco and Romanesque office buildings half-empty. Parts of Detroit have reverted to prairie, so lush that Michigan's Department of Natural Resources

Downtown Detroit (above); and (page 55) a statue of boxer Joe Louis, who grew up in Black Bottom.

exports Detroit pheasants to the countryside to improve the rural gene pool.

But now Detroit is poised for a comeback. Every signal—economic, political, social—is positive.

Detroit's resurgence, tentative but promising, feeds off a strong Michigan economy. In 1994 the state was first in the nation in new business creation and second in unemployment decline. The regional economy of Detroit and its suburbs grew 8.9 percent in 1993, according to Comerica economist David Littmann, mostly because of boom times at the three major auto companies, each of which announced record profits before recent slowdowns. Industrial leasing in the city itself jumped sharply during the final quarter of 1993 and has continued at record levels. Detroit's unemployment rate is down to 9 percent, far above the region's 5.3 percent but well below the city's 13.4 percent of April 1994 and way below 1990's 16.1 percent. Home prices are soaring.



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Detroiters are hopeful, and much of their optimism focuses on their new mayor, Dennis Archer, a 52-year-old former Michigan Supreme Court justice who took office in January 1994. His fresh approach to governing the city inspires confidence—especially in contrast with the previous 20-year reign of Coleman Young, the civil-rights hero who, after some successes in his first two terms as mayor, declined into an isolated autocrat and hastened Detroit's decay.

Archer began his political career as manager of Young's 1977 reelection campaign, when Young still commanded wide respect. But while Young had come of age as a political warrior battling the establishment, Archer rose smoothly through its ranks, eventually representing Detroit's corporate elite as a partner in one of the city's premier law firms, Dickinson Wright.

Not that Archer was born in such a milieu. He grew up in rural poverty in a tin-roofed house without plumbing in Cassopolis, Michigan, near the Indiana border. His father worked all his life, mostly as a handyman, despite having lost an arm. Young Archer worked his way through a local state college, Western Michigan University, living in a dorm known as "Hungry Hall" because it served no meals, making it the cheapest on campus. A month before the infamous 1967 Detroit riots, he married a fellow lawyer, Trudy DunCombe, now a Michigan trial judge. After graduating from the University of Detroit Law School, Archer worked as a trial lawyer in a couple of small Detroit firms. He became active in the American Bar Association, chairing a committee that was credited with increasing the number of minority lawyers in big firms.

A natural conciliator, disciplined and handsome, Democrat Archer works well with Republican Governor John Engler and the GOP-controlled Michigan Legislature—too well, some Democrats now charge, painting him as a closet Republican and a pawn of big business. Archer shrugs off such criticism. "We need business," he says. "We need economic development. We need jobs. That's what I was elected to produce."

Archer has set a tough standard for himself. "Write it down," he says coolly: "In ten years we will catch and overtake Toronto and similar places as the urban place to be." Robert C. Larson, chairman of both the Taubman Realty Group (owner-developers of regional shopping centers) and the mayor's Land Use Task Force, offers a more measured view: "Detroit is about what cities like Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland have been about in the past—confronting the reality of their situation very objectively and finding ways to marry the financial resources of the private sector with public resources to turn the city around. The example set by those three is what we're planning in Detroit."

Detroit's decline is a textbook case of how to kill a city. The table of contents reads like this: a history of poor race relations, a shrinking industrial base, the U.S. auto industry's collapse in the seventies, and Coleman Young's mayoralty.

Like other cities, Detroit suffered devastating race riots in the late sixties. But its race relations were unusually tense to begin with. Many of Detroit's white as well as black forebears had come up from the Deep South, bringing with them antagonistic racial attitudes that were worsened by auto industry labor policies pitting blacks and whites against each other.

During the thirties, Henry Ford recruited large numbers of blacks to Ford's River Rouge plant, winning their loyalty to the company in preference to the United Auto Workers, at that time (like other unions) unfriendly to blacks. In January 1937, Ford assembled a squad of tough black men from the Rouge plant as guards. In that year's notorious Battle of the Overpass, several of those guards brutally assaulted leafleting union officials. Chrysler, for its part, recruited blacks to cross a picket line in 1939. Two years later, a strike at Ford's Rouge plant led to fistfights, beatings, and stabbings between mostly white unionists and mostly black strikebreakers.

The Detroit Police Department was notoriously infected with racism: until a new city charter outlawed race discrimination in 1974, the department had routinely marked "C" for "colored" on blacks' job application forms. In 1967, when the force was still 90 percent white, the "rebellion"—as many Detroiters still call the riots—began in reaction to a routine police raid of an illegal after-hours nightclub in a black neighborhood, which fanned smoldering hostility. Arson, looting, and sniping erupted. On the second night, a young police officer died, shot in the stomach. On the infamous third night, police and national guardsmen answered a call at the Algiers Motel, where they found ten black men, two white women, and no guns. When the cops left, three of the men were dead; the others, including the women, had been severely beaten. As word raced through the city, burning and looting raged more furiously.

The riots, Coleman Young once wrote, 'put Detroit on the fast track to economic desolation.'

The riots, Coleman Young once wrote, "put Detroit on the fast track to economic desolation." Whites fled; all in-migration ceased. In the last five months of 1967, out-migration totaled 67,000 people; another 80,000 left in 1968, and 46,000 in 1969. By 1973, when Young was elected mayor, the population had fallen to 1.39 million from its peak of 1.85 million in 1952; it stood at 1.03 million in 1990. The proportion of whites in Detroit dropped from 56 percent in 1970 to 22 percent in 1990—the smallest of any of America's 150 largest cities.

Other factors helped fuel the flight from Detroit. Middle-class citizens, white and black, sought the lower taxes and better services available right across Eight Mile Road, Detroit's northern border. White flight escalated again during the court-ordered school busing efforts of the seventies. Mayor Young antagonized whites further by promoting a confrontational stance toward the suburbs—a stance that allowed him to consolidate his political base by fanning the resentments of an increasingly black Detroit.

Meanwhile, Detroit's economic base weakened, the result in part of federal post-war industrial policies. Fearing a nuclear attack on the nation's industrial heart, Washington encouraged industry to disperse. It built expressways and then subsidized industrial move-outs, beginning in the late forties with Chrysler's move to Twinsburg, Ohio. Other plants soon followed.

Post-war federal urban renewal policy was little better for Detroit. Bulldozers razed whole neighborhoods, particularly African-American ones like Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. The tailor shop Coleman Young's father had owned was "plowed under" in 1950, says Young. "Ours was the first neighborhood to be eliminated," Young recalls. "We called it 'blight by announcement.' " Black Bottom lay in ruins for six years before the first new buildings went up.

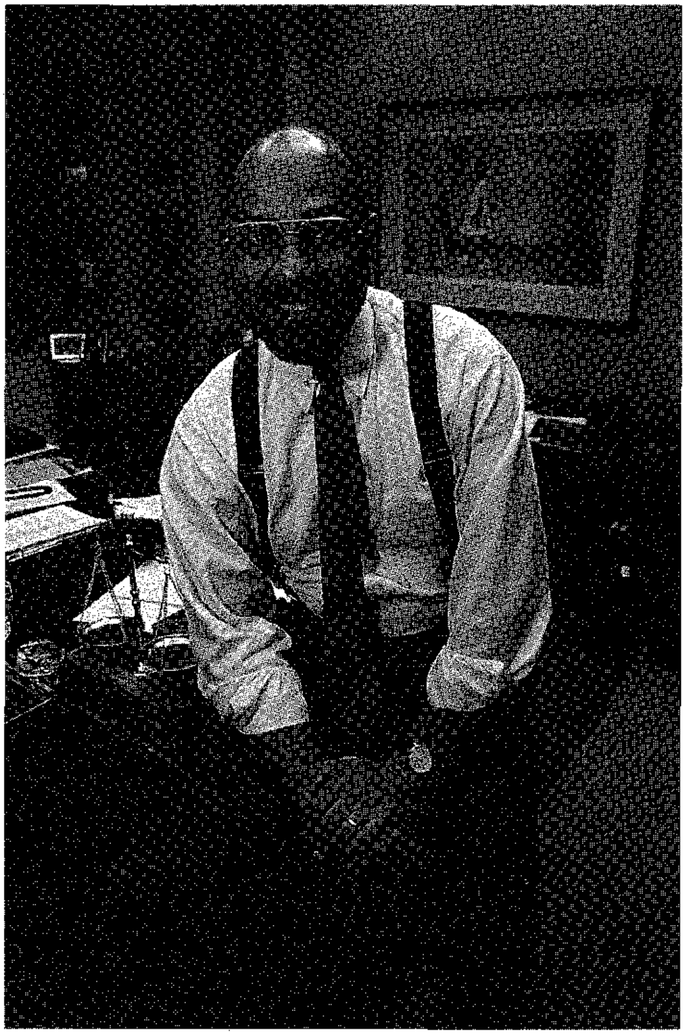
Detroit's economy unraveled most dramatically in the 1970s, as the auto industry made wrong decisions at every turn, setting off an unparalleled slide. The Big Three automakers continued producing gas guzzlers long after the Arab oil embargo hit in 1973. They built unattractive cars when consumers wanted style. They blamed their problems on outside forces—punitive federal regulations, unfair foreign competition, unforeseeable changes in taste. By the late seventies, Chrysler, which had drained cash and management talent from its Detroit operation to feed unprofitable foreign subsidiaries, faced bankruptcy and only survived thanks to a federal bailout. Ford, though far stronger than Chrysler, had waited until the second gas shortage after the 1979 Iranian revolution before retooling to make small cars, which, because of lower profit margins and Ford's inefficiency, lost money even when they sold well.

General Motors, much larger than Chrysler or Ford, set the terms for the whole industry—and they proved self-destructive terms. When GM signed an excessively generous labor contract with the UAW—as often happened in the days when U.S. companies could sell products as fast as they could make them and so kept their plants running at any cost—Ford and Chrysler meekly followed suit. The Big Three raised car prices as they liked, with little fear of being undercut by overseas competition. The industry had become a shared monopoly, with predetermined, protected market shares. Labor and management costs mushroomed, and the industry's inbred culture stifled innovation.

GM's managerial culture set the pattern. Says auto industry analyst Maryann Keller of the Furman Selz investment firm: "The mystique of General Motors' 14th floor [the company's executive suite] had many bad consequences, not the least of which were obscene executive privileges and insularity. This was a story of arrogance, of management not wanting to recognize that the world was changing. Detroit was a very isolated place. Everybody in the industry went to the Detroit Athletic Club and congregated at the same country clubs; everybody told each other everything was fine. I remember Henry Ford II talking [in the early seventies] about how the Ford Pinto would push the Japs back into the Pacific Ocean."

The Big Three took forever to realize they had been leapfrogged by the Japanese. They believed that the Japanese had captured the American market only because they made smaller, cheaper cars. They were stunned by surveys in the late seventies showing that Americans thought Japanese cars were better and intended to continue buying them. In 1980, GM, Ford, and Chrysler lost a total of $3.5 billion. They laid off 250,000 workers; their suppliers laid off an additional 450,000, most in the greater Detroit area. Unnoticed until too late, the Japanese auto industry had grown from the smallest in the world in 1960 to the largest 20 years later—spelling disaster for Detroit.

Today, Detroit has just three auto assembly plants left. Only General Motors still has its head-



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Mayor Dennis Archer

quarters in the city, but many executives now work in suburban Warren, Michigan. GM has fewer than 9,000 employees in the city itself, about one-third of 1984's number.

The non-automotive sectors of Detroit's economy suffered too. In the seventies and eighties, companies—Uniroyal, Vernor's Ginger Ale, Revere Copper—closed their Detroit headquarters and left abandoned sites behind. Their plants, built in the twenties and thirties, were often decrepit and dangerous 50 years later, with inadequate ventilation, antiquated machinery, and polluted grounds.

Detroit's political institutions, which mirrored the insularity and hubris of the auto industry, hastened the city's decline. Maryann Keller notes the eerie consistency of the elites' approaches: "What's the Detroit culture—public sector and private? Bravado; insularity; perks. Every auto executive was marching his company off a cliff, refusing to recognize that anyone could think of a better way of doing things. No one took responsibility for anything. The lack of leadership in the auto industry and in Detroit itself certainly are parallel."

The central personage in the city's decline was Coleman Young, a larger-than-life figure with a larger-than-life impact on Detroit's fate. His family had moved from Alabama to Black Bottom in 1923. As a worker and union activist at Ford's River Rouge plant in the mid-thirties, Young allied himself with left-wing union militants against UAW President Walter Reuther, who opposed allowing African-Americans in top union positions. When he returned to Detroit, after a World War II hitch as a fighter pilot, he fought bitterly with Reuther, who put him on a blacklist of "subversives," making it hard for him to maintain steady employment. During a McCarthy-era House Committee on Un-American Activities hearing in 1952, Young became a local hero for reprimanding a southern HUAC attorney: "That word is 'Negro,' not 'Niggra.' Speak more clearly."

'What's the Detroit culture—public sector and private? Bravado; insularity; perks.'

In 1964, after losing a few runs for office, Young won a seat in the State Senate, and—again persisting after a couple of defeats—he won election as mayor in 1973 and reelection in 1977 with the strong support of the local establishment, the "gasoline aristocracy." In 1981, no serious candidate of either party would run against him.

That year, with both its tax base and federal aid shrinking, Detroit hit a fiscal crisis proportionately as severe as New York City's 1975 crisis. Young resolutely pushed through both a wage freeze for city workers and an income tax hike. He sold off some city assets, including four public hospitals; he eliminated such services as meat and milk inspections; he moved the city jails and Welfare Department to the county's jurisdiction.

That adept crisis-management was Young's peak: thereafter, his last decade in power proved catastrophic.

He stoked up racial resentment, describing himself as a "black man first and a Democrat second." During his 1973 campaign Young had promised to give blacks their rightful place in city government. He decreed that for every white cop promoted, a black officer had to be advanced too. One housing manager recalls: "I was a white liberal intent on doing some good. What surer route to doing good than public housing? Then in 1977 my career halted. My supervisor warned me nicely: because of my race, I had no future in the agency." To the complaint that such measures amounted to reverse discrimination, Young had a categorical reply: "You're damn right—the only way to arrest discrimination is to reverse it."

Young's political style was famously confrontational and his sense of humor legendarily raw.

A Visit with Coleman Young

A year and a half after leaving the mayoral mansion, Coleman Young still lives in splendor, but now in a corner apartment on a high floor in one of the two riverfront towers developed by Max Fisher and Alfred Taubman. He is even more isolated than when he was in power: few have his telephone number, and they don't give it out.

© AMEEN HOWRANI

One who does have it is Otis K. Lee, owner of Mr. FoFo's, a delicatessen that sells more corned beef than any other restaurant in the country. As Lee talks of his admiration for Young, we see streams of people entering and leaving a crack house across the street from his restaurant. "Coleman wanted black leaders with purity in their hearts to lead their people out of poverty," Lee says. "His problem was that he didn't have the soldiers. When Coleman was in office, this city was predominantly run by blacks. And what did we do with this? We lost everything."

Suddenly he asks if I would like to meet Mayor Young. We head downtown to the former mayor's apartment building. Security is tight, with several checkpoints. Lee, who lives in the adjacent tower, is waved through. An austere sixtyish woman opens Young's apartment door and ushers us into an enormous living room, perhaps 50 feet long, overlooking the river. A few minutes later she shows us into the den, also overlooking the river.

Mayor Young is asleep when we arrive. Two huge television sets are blaring. He's old, sick, and tired enough to be sleeping at his desk in the middle of the afternoon. Yet somehow he gives off an aura of strength—a sleeping lion, not a tired old man. He's wearing a dark blue silk robe over a blue-and-white pin-striped cotton shirt. His head is nodding onto his chest; his hands, beautifully manicured, are resting on his lap; oxygen tubes are attached to his nose. Lee calls to him gently several times, using his title—Mayor, not Coleman.

Young stares icily at me as Lee makes the introductions. Then the former mayor smiles the smile that charmed presidents and CEOs and infuriated his enemies. He's gotten far on charm, and it hasn't failed him even as his body has weakened. The coldness returns as he hears I'm writing a story about Mayor Archer. "Archer," he says, pointedly using the last name rather than the familiar first or the respectful title, "has been very vindictive toward my appointees. He has studiously fired anyone from my administration. I kept over half the people from the previous administration. Archer has hired people from out of the city. Showing his contempt."

Young speaks of honor constantly. Thomas Aquinas Murphy, chairman of General Motors, was a man of honor; Lee Iacocca was not. If Murphy said he would build a plant, he would keep his word. If Iacocca said the same thing, he'd try to change the deal as soon as he could. But Murphy was followed by faceless bureaucrats whose word didn't mean a thing. GM, Young contends, was founded by titans and is now run by bookkeepers—little guys bent on their own personal ambitions.

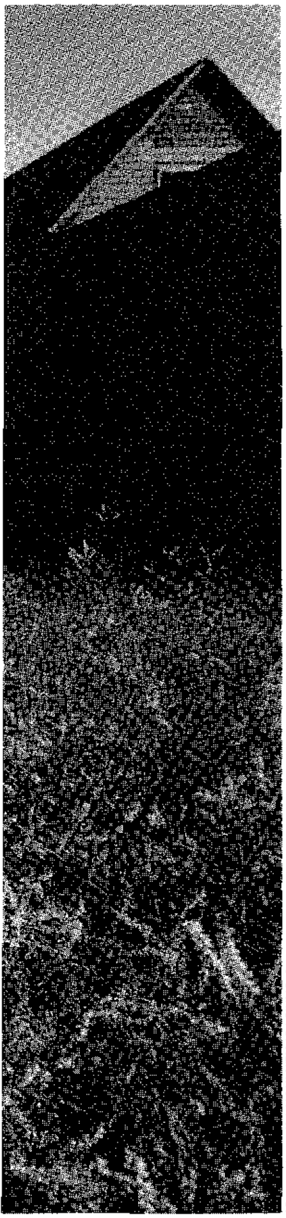
Young looks at me shrewdly: "The city, too."

The 'urban prairie' is so lush that the state captures Detroit pheasants to improve the rural gene pool.

Some were charmed, including Eugene Keilin, a Lazard Frères investment banker, who advised the mayor during the 1981 fiscal crisis. "Coleman may not have been the first person to call me a motherfucker," he recalls. "But he was the first to call me that to my face."

Generally, Young's adversarial demeanor further isolated his city. In July 1991, national news programs broadcast an amateur videotape of two white suburban women being brutally beaten at a fireworks show by a group of young black women. Although four of the five Detroit women charged in the attack pleaded no contest, Young maintained they were victims of "a railroad job or lynch session."

Neither city services nor the lives of Detroit's blacks improved under Young's watch. Says Roger Kaplan, formerly with the *Detroit News*:



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"Young's rhetoric wouldn't have mattered if he had helped create a solid, entrepreneurial black middle class. The only black middle class became one dependent on government jobs."

Most important, Young seems to have lost interest in the details of governing midway through his administration. He stopped going to his offices in the City-County Building and lived in isolated splendor in the Gilded Age Manoogian Mansion, a few miles away on the Detroit River. Even his commissioners seldom saw him. Visitors tell of finding him in the mansion, at all hours, dressed in elegant silk pajamas, eating huge meals of ribs and fried chicken, and playing solitaire in front of three blaring televisions, each tuned to a different channel. Young is said to have developed his habit of keeping the TV loud when he became convinced—accurately, it turned out—that the FBI was bugging his rooms.

Young's inattention spread through the ranks. City agencies stopped functioning, so business people couldn't obtain routine permits and licenses. Many city employees stopped coming in altogether or, worse, came in and demanded bribes. Routine malfeasance led to spectacular instances of corruption. Young's police commissioner went to federal prison in 1992 for embezzling $2.4 million, for example.

The city grew dirty, dangerous, and polluted. In stark reproach, the suburbs sit right across the road—clean, safe, and lovely—because, as Detroit contractor Joseph Thompson argues, suburbanites demand it. "A thief knows better than to go there," he says. "Here a thief knows he can do anything: he gets caught, he's out the next morning. Not in Grosse Pointe. You get caught, you get thrown in prison. Even the trash respects Grosse Pointe. It blows right to that line and then stops. It knows better than to cross the border."

Detroit's deplorable public services come at high cost. As the city's population dwindled—and as the real value of its property tax base declined by nearly two-thirds, or $3.6 billion, between 1970 and 1990—tax rates rose and rose. The property tax rate hit the highest level Michigan law allows, higher than all major American cities except Chicago. Detroit also slapped an income tax on residents, corporations, and non-resident workers, all at the highest rate allowed by the state. The city squeezed a 5 percent tax from all utility bills. All these taxes come out of what was already the poorest urban population in the country, with a median income of $19,390 when Young left office.

Almost seven times greater than the Michigan average, Detroit's local tax burden is among the highest in the country, according to the U.S. General Accounting Office. Perversely, the state government rewards the city for its high taxes—or "local effort," in Lansing's euphemistic phrase. "Detroit gets almost half of statewide distributions based on relative tax effort," notes the Citizens Research Council, a Detroit good-government group, creating "an additional and very real incentive to keep local taxes high."

Young was as unsuccessful in reviving Detroit's economy as in making its government work smoothly. Indeed, in his last years as mayor, he followed many of the same policies that had devastated Detroit in his youth, including mindlessly destructive urban renewal. His administration acquired and tore down whole swaths of Detroit; it issued 41,800 more demolition permits than construction permits.

For the most part, Young's economic development strategy centered on state capitalism—big, splashy projects of dubious economic value, created at taxpayers' expense. The hostile city government, meanwhile, helped smother thousands of small businesses. Contractor Thompson was determined to start an elegant restaurant in Brush Park, a neighborhood of nearly destroyed mansions. To open, he needed a certificate of occupancy from the buildings department. He wrote, he called, he went down to the City-County Building and begged; but he couldn't get an inspector to come out. When, in desperation, he opened his restaurant anyway, inspectors were there within an hour to shut him down. By the time he reopened two and a half weeks later, he had lost $60,000 in gross receipts.

Most entrepreneurs weren't so persistent. During Young's tenure, Detroit lost more than 40 percent of its jobs. Between 1972 and 1991, the number of manufacturing, wholesale, and retail establishments declined by over 45 percent, service establishments by over 17 percent.

Many white Detroit business people, unwilling to be quoted by name, look back on the Young years with particular bitterness. Says one, who left the city in 1982: "Coleman was a racist, and he made it clear that white businesses were unwelcome, which meant to me that we would go unprotected. We could get robbed, burned out, preyed upon by city inspectors, and Coleman wouldn't do anything. He encouraged attacks on us. There was absolutely no reason—not a one—to stay in Detroit."

In the end, Young lost the confidence even of African-American former supporters. "I liked Mayor Young," says Joseph Thompson, "but I prayed he wouldn't last. I took the biggest gamble of my life when I opened my restaurant assuming we'd have a new mayor." The Reverend James Holley, the outspoken pastor of the Little Rock Baptist Church, says, "Coleman gave us pride, but pride took priority over substance. We can't live off pride; we can only live off the exchange of wealth. He stood up against white people and cursed them out, but did this put any money in the black man's pocket? Create any new business? We were wrapped up in having a black mayor, but we didn't ask: What is he doing to make life better for all of us?"

Responsibility—his own and his constituents'—is a major theme of Mayor Archer's. In his inaugural address, he exhorted his largely black audience: "Sweep the sidewalk in front of your house. Clean the rubbish from the storm sewer on your street. Pick up the broken glass in your alley. Demand that I get the trash picked up—on time. Insist that I make the buses run—on time." He paused, leaned forward, and said, "And get a grip on your life and the lives of your children!" He got a tumultuous standing ovation.

Archer's political strategy is to replace Young's combativeness with conciliation. During Young's mayoralty, John Amberger, executive director of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, called Eight Mile Road the Maginot Line. Now, Amberger says, "it's becoming, instead of a barrier, a bridge between the city and suburbs." The counties of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb and 16 communities, including Detroit, have formed the Eight Mile Road Association, a cooperative organization to manage cleanups and policing along Detroit's border with its northern suburbs.

Archer won the mayoralty with only about half the black vote: his 57 percent majority included 80 percent of the non-black vote. Coleman Young had endorsed Archer's opponent, and the black community is still far from unanimous in its support for Archer's approach. Some blacks argue that conciliation with the suburbs will mean betrayal of Detroit; they disapprove of the generous tax abatements and benefits Archer has used to attract companies to the city, plausibly arguing that it is unfair for newly arriving companies to shoulder a smaller tax burden than businesses and residents who stayed through hard times. Archer says that he too opposes such abatements in principle, but the dismal economy he inherited leaves him with no alternative. "I'm trying to attract enough of a tax base so we can cut taxes for everybody."

Archer is surely right in trying to end Detroit's economic isolation. If the city is to enjoy an economic renaissance, it will need investment from outside. "We're not talking instant gratification here," cautions Robert Larson, the suburban developer who heads Archer's land-use task force. "We're talking about the opportunity to reverse a trend of disinvestment and population loss that has occurred in Detroit over decades." Between 1960 and 1980, according to Michigan State University geographer Joe Darden, Detroit went from having 42.3 percent of the region's population and 49.6 percent of its wealth to having only 27.6 percent of its population and a mere 16.5 percent of its wealth.

Says Larson: "What Detroit has to do is set up the conditions that allow it to compete more forcefully for the businesses that have been attracted to this region for some time: the computer and high-tech companies attracted by the Lansing–Ann Arbor–Detroit educational corridor, health jobs attracted by the same corridor's health industry, and, of course, auto-related businesses." Comerica's Littmann says that the crucial industry will continue to be automotive: the Big Three manufacturers and their suppliers, thousands of smaller firms in the region and hundreds in Detroit itself.

GM, Ford, and Chrysler are all now profitable, thanks to corporate restructuring, popular new models, and the strong yen that has hurt Japanese carmakers. Yet the industry is volatile, and it was partly luck that the car Chrysler decided to make in Detroit, the Jeep Grand Cherokee, was a hit, prompting the company to announce recently that it would hire some 800 new workers for a third Jeep shift. "I'm more enthusiastic about the city of Detroit than I have been in the past 20 years," said Chrysler chief executive Robert Eaton. But many Detroiters ask the question *Fortune* magazine recently posed: Will the Big Three screw up again?

Analyst Keller says Chrysler and Ford won't, but General Motors is another matter. "GM would lose money if there were a recession tomorrow. Unless it brings its cost structure down to a truly competitive level, its market share will erode. But from Detroit's point of view, that may not matter: the gainers in market share this time will be Ford and Chrysler, not the Japanese."

The dominance of the auto industry, along with Detroit's proximity to Canada, makes the city a center of international commerce, with more than half of all trade between the United States and Canada passing through the area. Moreover, says John Carroll of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation: "We're finding an increasing number of overseas companies locating here to sell to the auto industry. R&D firms know they need a presence here if they're going to sell to the Big Three. And since the auto industry is now looking to make a 'green car'—a car that's lighter, cleaner, cheaper—they're looking worldwide for new technology." Carroll is working with three French companies seeking to establish themselves in Detroit.

'We will work day and night to improve the economic climate and attract more investment,' Mayor Archer says.

Archer is trying to encourage the private sector in every way possible. "We will work day and night to improve the economic climate and attract more investment," he says. He has streamlined licensing procedures, set up a special office to help small-business people navigate the city bureaucracy, and negotiated with state and federal regulators on behalf of Detroit businessmen who feel harassed. He is working to make it easier for businesses to acquire city-owned or abandoned land and obtain environmental permits to build on it.

After his inauguration, city officials started getting 50 to 80 calls a day from businesses inquiring about locating in Detroit; it still gets five to ten such calls daily. Most of the callers ask what kind of land is available in the city; some, particularly retailers, ask about demographics. Sensing opportunity, big discount retailers like Toys "R" Us and Wal-Mart have expressed interest in the city, says Robert Larson.

Gloria Robinson, who became Archer's director of planning and economic development after holding a similar job in Wayne County, which includes Detroit, sees these efforts beginning to pay off. "We used to get businesses in Wayne County that had been driven out of Detroit," she says. "Now we're getting the reverse—businesses that had just been waiting to come back home to the city." Among the major companies that have already returned are Kroger, Honeywell, and Ace Paper Products. "Now that they're welcome here, they see economic advantages to coming," Robinson says.

Consider the case of F. X. Coughlin, an international freight-forwarding company that was founded in Detroit in 1959 and moved out in the late sixties. In March 1994, the firm won a packaging and warehousing contract to service a Chrysler plant. It could have built its facility in the suburbs but chose Detroit for its central location and business-friendly government. What's more, says William Gibson, a Coughlin manager of marketing and sales, "the infrastructure we need is more readily found within city limits: I'm talking about rail sidings, utilities, and the right layout of roads and highways."

More surprisingly, some companies cite the potential of the city's labor force among Detroit's attractions. Thyssen Steel, a German company with $1.7 billion in North American sales annually, offers German-style apprenticeships to local youths in its beautifully kept, unfenced steel processing plant that sits in the middle of a blighted neighborhood. "We have very dedicated workers with very low turnover," says senior vice president Malcolm Gill. "They are very trainable—in fact, that's what they're often looking for. In exchange for our training them, they are loyal to us." Thyssen recently decided to double the size of its Detroit plant. "We really embraced Mayor Archer's philosophy of working with business. He cut out some of the red tape."

Detroit's attention to the private sector comes after years of Mayor Young's disdain. So bad had Young's relations become with business that the CEO of Michigan's largest bank, the National Bank of Detroit, was quoted in 1994 as saying that the bank would have left Detroit had Young been reelected. Under Archer, NBD not only stayed in Detroit but also established a $40 million plan to invest in commercial real estate in the city. Archer persuaded the Clinton administration to award one of six $100 million empowerment Zone grants to Detroit. Unlike New York, which, *City Journal* reports, is focusing its empowerment money on nonprofit organizations (see "Where's the Power in the Empowerment Zone?" Spring 1995), Detroit has fully engaged the private sector: a consortium of banks, businesses, and financial institutions has pledged $1.9 billion in capital to businesses and home owners within the zone, an 18-square-mile area of devastation that has seen almost no investment for 20 years.

Detroit has a growing, outspoken black entrepreneurial class. Dave Bing, a former Detroit Pistons star turned steel executive, moved his stamping operation into Detroit from the suburbs. Bing's two established companies have annual sales of around $90 million, mostly from contracts with Big Three automakers; his third company, which he formed last year in partnership with two other African-American Detroiters, will bring the revenues of all Bing ventures to about $180 million annually.

Bing says that three-fourths of the 300 people on his $8 million payroll are black, and 12 percent of his subcontracts are with minority-owned companies. Bing recently issued a challenge to business people to "put their money where their mouth is and start helping Detroit." He expects his fellow African-American entrepreneurs and investors to put their money into Detroit, even if it's riskier than locating elsewhere.

Detroit is also benefiting from tiny businesses started by a small but increasing population of immigrant entrepreneurs. Chaldeans (Iraqi Christians), who used to head immediately for

Dearborn, are now starting grocery stores and small restaurants in Detroit; Mexicans are opening restaurants and shops in Mexicantown, part of the Empowerment Zone; Russians, Croats, and Serbs are settling near Poletown rather than suburban Hamtramck.

Perhaps most encouraging, young professionals are buying houses within the city, and older households are moving back. Home prices are running 25 percent higher than a year ago, and the average time it takes to sell a house is about 45 days, down from 180 days a year ago. When C. Beth DunCombe, Mayor Archer's sister-in-law and former law partner, went to close on a house in Detroit immediately after the election, she was told the price had gone up 10 percent. "Everyone knows that Detroit's going to turn around now," said the broker. "Property's worth more than it was last month."

But Archer faces huge challenges. He presides over a city once called the murder capital of the country, now ranking 11th among American cities in overall violent crime. Crime remains the top concern of Detroiters in nearly every poll. Archer's police commissioner is a much admired former cop who had retired in disgust during Young's administration and gone to Wayne State for a Ph.D. in philosophy. The new commissioner spent much of his first year trying to clean up the mess his predecessor left behind: chronic absenteeism, abuse of sick leave, unnecessarily expensive automobile leases, and inept computerization.

Detroit's services remain poor. "I inherited a City Hall in which we had rotary phones; we had no computers; vendors got paid eight to nine months later," says Archer. "Vendors charged us what they called a 'Detroit price.' They tacked on interest. They took a float on their money. We didn't do repairs by management; we did repairs by crisis. If something was an absolute mess, we fixed it; otherwise not. Our records of our land holdings were so fragmentary that we had no idea what we owned. HUD was getting ready to take over our housing department. I want to do the big stuff, but first I had to fix the little stuff. And at the same time we have to make the city attractive, safe, and clean."

The new mayor arranged for the Ford Motor Company to conduct Edwards Deming–style Total Quality Management seminars for city employees. "It's one way to get them to think about citizens as their customers," he says. Even as he tries to improve city services, Archer must shrink the city government, which is now Detroit's largest employer. His first budget cut 270 positions, including 50 that paid more than $60,000 a year.

Those who stayed in Detroit through its worst days are enthusiastic about the city's prospects under Mayor Archer. Peter Schweitzer, who heads the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency's Detroit office, made national news last summer when he refused a promotion to the top spot in the company's New York headquarters, in order to stay in Detroit. "We're at the beginnings of a revival in this town, and I want to be here for it," he said. "Business investment in Detroit is increasing, with the result that ancillary businesses like ours are doing very well. It's very clear that the domestic auto business, and certainly Ford, learned its lessons from the early eighties and is not about to repeat those mistakes. We also now have good local political leadership. We're all saying, 'Let's let the past be gone and get on with the future, because the future looks good.'"

'Everyone knows that Detroit's going to turn around now. Property's worth more than it was last month.'

Detroit's motto, which dates from a catastrophic 1805 fire, is: *Speramus meliora. Resurget cineribus.* "We hope for better things. It will rise from the ashes." Archer may be the mayor who makes that happen. ◆

The Feds' Orwellian War on New York's Courts

Heather Mac Donald

When New York State legislators added judges to New York City's overburdened trial courts in 1982, they little imagined the fallout in 1994: a massive federal assault on the state's judiciary. Nothing, after all, could have seemed more reasonable than adding the new judgeships. The city's criminal justice system had long been in a state of crisis, as it is today. In the Bronx County Courthouse, for example—with a backlog of 20,000 cases, many dating from 1990—most homicide cases coming to trial are over two years old. By the time many defendants get to court, they have committed another eight or nine crimes. Every day, cases are postponed indefinitely for lack of judges to hear them.

Routinely adding new judges, New York met a monster: a crusading Justice Department determined to prove that the city's minority-controlled judicial selection process discriminated against minorities.

By responding to this overwhelming need, however, the Legislature unknowingly marched into a quagmire: review under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by the civil rights division of the Justice Department.

The dismaying drama that followed suggests that the country's civil rights machinery has spun out of control. Not only did the Justice Department put the state and city through months of costly administrative and legal turmoil; it did so without legal authority. Indeed, for years the department has operated outside its mandate, relying on the act's Byzantine complexity to shield it from public scrutiny.

Although the Justice Department has a long history of overstepping its power under the Voting Rights Act, its attack on New York's courts particularly typifies the approach of the Clinton administration's civil rights division, which under Assistant Attorney General Deval Patrick is suffused with the unshakable conviction that racism pervades every American institution. In the New York case, the division attacked as discriminatory a judicial selection system wholly controlled by minorities.

The ability of the Voting Rights Act to wreak havoc on legislative redistricting is well known. But the federal government and civil rights groups are also wielding the act to impose racial quotas

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on state court systems. New York's story provides a disturbing glimpse into the use and abuse of a law that increasingly shapes government nationwide.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was a triumph of the civil rights revolution. Though the Fifteenth Amendment had guaranteed blacks the vote since 1870, virtually impregnable barriers kept them away from the polls in the South—above all the literacy test, shamelessly manipulated by southern states against black would-be voters. The Voting Rights Act banned literacy and other voting tests in southern states for five years, leading to massive black enfranchisement that changed the region's politics forevermore.

Ultimately, though, another provision of the act has had the greatest impact on the political landscape—and has caused havoc in the New York case. Section five of the act required six southern states and many southern localities to submit every change in voting procedure to the Justice Department for pre-clearance. The emphasis is on "every"—moving a voting booth or changing the registrar's phone number required review. If the department decided that the proposed change had either the purpose or the effect of diminishing minority voting rights, it denied pre-clearance and blocked any upcoming elections based on the proposed change.

As Justice Hugo Black observed in 1966, to require a state or locality to submit legislation to Washington for approval creates the impression that the states "are little more than conquered provinces." But in 1965 such an extraordinary expansion of federal power was essential to protect the franchise of southern blacks and prevent states from circumventing the ban on literacy tests by inventing new barriers to the vote. Section five, intended as a temporary measure, quickly became entrenched. Subsequent amendments to the Voting Rights Act prolonged its life indefinitely and extended it beyond the South. Today section five covers nine states and 45 localities nationwide, including Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. The Justice Department receives 19,000 pre-clearance requests a year.

Section five's vast power over state and local governments has not been great enough for the Justice Department. As Abigail Thernstrom lays out in *Whose Votes Count? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights*, the department has expanded the section's reach far beyond congressional intent and in violation of Supreme Court precedent. Section five has become the department's most potent tool for forcing radical changes in governance from localities. Justice's attack on New York's court system is a case in point.

"The Legislature never dreamed that increasing the number of judges had anything to do with voting rights."

The New York State Legislature unknowingly triggered section five in 1982 when it authorized the addition of ten new seats to the State Supreme Court in Brooklyn. (New York's primary trial courts, supreme courts adjudicate felonies and large civil suits.) The Legislature never dreamed in 1982 that increasing the number of judges had anything to do with voting rights. Indeed, it remained an open question until 1991 whether the Voting Rights Act even applied to the judiciary. Several courts had concluded that a law intended to guarantee minorities the right to "elect representatives of their choice" had no bearing on a non-representative branch of government. Civil rights advocates and the Justice Department, by contrast, sought to apply the act to the selection of judges to gain the same proportional representation on the bench that they demanded for legislatures. In 1991 the U.S. Supreme Court settled the matter in favor of judicial application.

Even so, it doesn't follow that adding judges to a court constitutes a change in voting procedure, when the method of electing them hasn't changed. Nevertheless, Justice—with ratification from the courts—has forced jurisdictions to pre-clear every judgeship they create.

Because of a bureaucratic snafu, New York didn't seek pre-clearance for its new judgeships even after the Supreme Court's 1991 decision. But in 1993, the state inadvertently alerted the department to the new positions when it submitted for pre-clearance a minor change in the qualifications for judicial candidates. Sniffing new quarry, Justice demanded to see every proposed or enacted law affecting judges since 1968. Upon reviewing the list, Justice preposterously demanded that New York pre-clear some 40 laws passed over a decade. Nearly all the laws had nothing to do with voting rights—for example, an act to increase the pensions of Family Court judges. In July 1994, New York dispatched a delegation of state attorneys to Washington to try to pare down Justice's demands. After further negotiations the state persuaded the department to settle for a mere four laws: three (including the original 1982 law) that created 15 new Supreme Court judgeships in Brooklyn and the Bronx and one that significantly changed the judicial nominating process. Two of the new seats under department review would be on the ballot in November, making pre-clearance an urgent necessity.

> **"Since 1991, half of all judges nominated and elected to the Supreme Court in Brooklyn have been minorities."**

Justice demanded thousands of pages of documents; the effort to comply nearly paralyzed the state Office of Court Administration. The Senate and Assembly election law committees, the city Board of Elections, and the state attorney general's office all spent the summer of 1994 photocopying. "Every time we provided what Justice asked for, they came back with ten more requests," recalls Mark Glazer, an Assembly attorney. Adds former first deputy attorney general Kenneth Munnelly: "We were feeding a tiger that was getting stronger and stronger."

Justice's requests included:

- a list of all members of the 1982, 1990, and 1994 New York legislatures (which authorized the additional judgeships), identified by race and ethnicity;
- a list of all legislative committees in those years by race and ethnicity;
- a list of every delegate and every candidate for delegate to the state's judicial nominating conventions since 1981—over 2,000 people—identified by race and ethnicity;
- the minutes of all nominating conventions since 1981;
- every judge who had served as an acting Supreme Court justice since 1981 (a list that would take perhaps a year to generate, since acting judges can serve as briefly as 24 hours for the purpose of criminal arraignments);
- all newspaper articles on the addition of new judges;
- all correspondence between the Office of Court Administration and the State Legislature on the need for more judges;
- transcripts of all government telephone conversations regarding court mergers;
- every comment of every legislator regarding the judiciary; and
- judicial election returns from 1980 to 1993, analyzed by race and ethnicity.

Justice's paper chase aimed to show that minorities have "less access" than whites to the judicial selection process in New York City. That process is highly political—and in New York City, Democratic politics is the only game in town. Party leaders and political clubs control judicial nomination; no judicial candidate put on the ballot by the Democratic Party has ever lost.

Justice argued that this insider process shuts out minorities, but no amount of paper could possibly prove that, for minorities have become well-established insiders. The Democratic Party chairmen in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx are all black or Hispanic. In plain fact, minorities control the selection of judges in those boroughs.

What's more, since 1991, half of all judges nominated and elected to the Supreme Court in Brooklyn have been minorities. In the history of Brooklyn's judicial district, every minority who sought judicial nomination has been elected. In Manhattan, blacks are disproportionately represented on the Supreme Court, even though the number of black attorneys who have been at the bar for ten years—a prerequisite for judicial nomination—is quite small. In the Bronx; the number of Hispanic judges is proportional to the Puerto Rican population. And in the 1994 election—whose fate lay in Justice's hands—four of the eight non-incumbent candidates for the Supreme Court were minorities.

The Justice Department, however, has a simpler test for discrimination. Because the overall proportion of minorities on the bench in New York City is less than the proportion in the population at large, the department concluded, the selection system must be biased.

Justice's argument overlooks the glacial nature of change on the bench. Supreme Court justices serve 14-year terms and are traditionally reelected; vacancies are infrequent. Minorities began entering the profession in significant numbers only recently; though their numbers on the bench are increasing rapidly, it will be a while before they could conceivably achieve proportional representation.

These facts did not impress Justice. In late September another delegation of New York's legal and political elite traveled to Washington to try to persuade the department to call off its assault. The trip accomplished nothing. By then, says former state deputy attorney general Kenneth Munnelly, "it had become painfully obvious that the line [staff] attorneys were not buying our position," and that they were calling the shots.

As November approached, then–state Attorney General G. Oliver Koppell realized that Justice wasn't going to act on the state's pre-clearance request before the election, despite a year of document production. Justice's inaction put the state in a vulnerable position: with two unpre-cleared judgeships on the ballot, any voter, not to mention the department itself, could sue to enjoin the election. Rescheduling the election would have threatened the city's judicial system with chaos.

Justice's position regarding the two unprecleared seats complicated negotiations enormously. The problem was this: the ballot in November would list 12 judicial candidates on the Democratic ticket: eight for Brooklyn, four for the Bronx. Four of those candidates were incumbent white judges seeking reelection; the remaining eight (including four minorities) were running for six seats created before 1982 and the two unpre-cleared seats. The judicial nominating convention had selected two black candidates for the two new seats.

But the ballot in general elections does not identify which candidates are running for which seats—all candidates run as an undifferentiated group. From this fact, Justice made a far-fetched argument: any of the 12 candidates, including the four white incumbents, could be running for the unpre-cleared seats. Justice demanded that New York take two judges off the ballot—but not the two minority judges actually running for the new seats.

This demand did not sit well with the incumbent judges. "A week before the election, we were put into a state of panic," says Jules L. Spodek, one of the four incumbents. They hired their own attorney; the fees, according to Judge Spodek, have been "devastating."

With negotiations stalled and barely two weeks to go before the election, Koppell filed a motion with the federal District Court in Washington, D.C. (the only other forum with the authority to preclear electoral changes), asking for approval of the new judgeships. The court refused to act on the state's motion before the election. It agreed, however, to an unprecedented last-minute settlement between Koppell and U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno that allowed the election to go forward but prohibited the newly elected judges from being seated until either the Justice Department or the court resolved the issue.

By this time the White House had gotten involved. "We had to turn to a higher authority to point out that DOJ [the Department of Justice] was running roughshod over a Democratic system," says Jeffrey C. Feldman, executive director of the Brooklyn Democratic Party. In the fall and winter of 1994, Feldman and others within the New York delegation were in regular contact with presidential advisors about the case. They learned that Justice had told the president's counsel that it had uncovered a scheme in New York to discriminate against minorities. There was of course no evidence for such a claim—only Justice's bizarre theories.

Feldman believes that without White House pressure, Justice never would have agreed to the election. But beyond the minimum of allowing the election to proceed, Justice didn't budge.

Predictably, the full slate of Democratic judges won in November, bringing four minority judges to the bench. Hoping finally to persuade Justice that the system was fair to minorities, New York sent another delegation to Washington, this time consisting of the newly elected minority judges, other minority leaders, and the state's top lawyers. Jeffrey Feldman describes the scene: "There you had the state attorney general and the chief administrative law judge of New York sitting across the table from four punks from DOJ telling us to go to hell. It's frightening how much power the Voting Rights Act gives to a 24-year-old junior attorney. They can stop elections and pull judges off the bench."

Again, New York's effort was futile. On December 5, Loretta King, the acting assistant attorney general of the civil rights division, denied pre-clearance on the ground that the judicial nominating process "prevents minority voters from having an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice."

Minority leaders were stunned. "At a time when people of color are in a position to in fact influence the selection of judges, . . . it is being suggested that we should not do that," Roberto Ramirez, Bronx Democratic chairman, told the *New York Times.*

The four sitting judges were no happier. Not knowing whether they would still be in office in January, they couldn't schedule cases for the future. They then heard a rumor that Justice had cut a secret deal with the minority judges to protect those judges' interests, no matter what the outcome of the case. Asked about the allegation, Judge Alexander Hunter, one of the minority judges who went to Washington, would only say: "We walked out of the meeting with Justice comfortable that we had worked out a resolution for the future." According to Feldman: "Justice nearly ignited a race war in Brooklyn. The judges were tearing at each other."

What did Justice want from New York? Although under its own guidelines the department is not supposed to discuss alternative election systems with a locality seeking preclearance, that's not how it works in practice, according to officials from many states. Says ex–attorney general Koppell: "They wanted to discuss a global arrangement involving the entire selection method."

Justice's desire to broker a deal would have violated the New York Constitution, which requires two successive legislatures to pass on changes in the judicial selection system. Justice nevertheless was ready to create an alternative judicial selection system in the back room. "I felt this was way beyond their jurisdiction, and there was no way I could do that on behalf of the state," Koppell recalls.

Although Koppell never let the discussion get far enough to know for sure, one can speculate on Justice's agenda. In other jurisdictions, Justice and civil rights groups have been pressing for single-member judicial districts. Traditionally, judges are elected on an at-large basis: if eight judges sit in a county, the entire county votes on all eight. In a single-member system, each judge would run in a district one-eighth the size of the county but preserve jurisdiction county-wide. Because of the greater possibility of excluding white voters, some small single-member districts would be almost certain to nominate and elect minority judges.

Outside the civil rights lobby, every informed observer decries single-member districts as compromising judicial independence, wholly apart from any racial question. As election time approaches, if a suit involves one party who is a constituent and one who is not, "you will be cognizant of who will vote for you," says Judge Jules Spodek.

The principle of racial gerrymandering for judges sends a dangerous message: that only members of the same race can judge each other fairly—that white judges cannot adjudicate

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

Section five of the Voting Rights Act didn't give Justice the authority to challenge New York's judicial selection process. But another section would have. Understanding why Justice chose to use section five instead goes far toward explaining the department's strategy in voting rights cases.

Section two of the act prohibits the "denial or abridgement" of voting rights nationwide. In the New York case, Justice was essentially making a section two argument: that the judicial nominating process denies minorities the right to elect judges of their choice.

But from the perspective of a crusading Justice Department, section two imposes irksome procedural handicaps that slow down the department's mission. A section two plaintiff carries the burden of proving in court that an electoral system is discriminatory.

In a section five administrative proceeding, by contrast, the local government has the burden of persuading the Justice Department that its proposed change is not discriminatory—the locality is guilty unless Justice decides it's innocent. Justice need not provide any but the most cursory evidence or arguments in denying pre-clearance—a short letter will do.

Equally important, section two suits are fought in the local federal court. All court actions regarding section five must be brought in the District Court of the District of Columbia, an impossible expense for many small counties and towns. Most localities, faced with the cost of appealing a section five denial in a distant forum where they will carry the burden of proof, cave in to whatever demands Justice is making in exchange for pre-clearance. "The Justice Department uses ridiculous section five objections to pressure localities to settle," says Katherine Butler of the University of South Carolina Law School.

New York, however, had the resources to fight back. "This time," says the state's former deputy attorney general Kenneth Munnelly, "Justice picked the wrong defendant."

many criminal cases properly because they do not understand the problems that lead minorities to crime. In an impassioned dissent to a voting rights case from Georgia, federal District Judge Dudley H. Bowen, a Carter appointee, argued forcefully against single-member districts: "Any suggestion of racial gerrymandering for judges is anathematic to all Anglo-American tenets of judicial independence and impartiality. Every Negro and every Caucasian is entitled to the same fair justice from a superior court judge, regardless of race."

After Justice denied pre-clearance in the New York case, the most pressing question was not what alternative judicial system to erect, however, but how to get rid of two of the 12 newly elected judges before January 1, when they were to be seated. Attorney General Janet Reno proposed drawing lots, a suggestion that drew derision and disbelief. Said Bronx Democratic chairman Roberto Ramirez: "For the Justice Department to suggest that we should be selecting judges by pulling straws out says to me that the system has gone haywire."

> **"This reading of the Voting Rights Act represents—no other phrase will do—an abuse of power."**

Even from Justice's perspective, the lottery suggestion had a fatal flaw: it didn't safeguard the four minority seats. It was quietly retired. With no resolution in sight, New York went back to court on December 16, urgently seeking judicial pre-clearance before the deadline for seating the judges. Virtually all the city's bar and judicial associations had leaped into the negotiations; the state's attorneys were spending half their days on the phone trying to develop a contingency plan should the court fail to resolve the case before the January 1 deadline.

It was in court that the full absurdity of the situation became clear. Justice's attack on New York was based on a complete misreading of the law. Justice had denied pre-clearance because New York's judicial nominating process, in its view, discriminated against minorities. Therefore, any addition to the courts that leaves the underlying selection system intact, it argued, is also discriminatory and cannot be pre-cleared.

This reading of section five of the Voting Rights Act represents—no other phrase will do—an abuse of power. U.S. Supreme Court precedent requires the department to confine its section five inquiry to the question of whether the proposed voting change has a "retrogressive" effect on minority voting strength—whether the change puts minorities in a weaker electoral position than before. If the change merely preserves the electoral status quo, the department must approve it, no matter the merits of the underlying electoral system.

In New York's case, Justice admitted that the addition of judges had no retrogressive effect on minority voting rights. In fact, the new posts clearly increased minority power by opening up new opportunities for minority judges. Every minority legislator and every minority caucus since 1982 has supported the addition of judgeships for that reason.

Under Supreme Court rulings, once Justice concluded that the addition of judges had no retrogressive effect, it should have promptly closed the case. But for the past 20 years, Justice has been denying pre-clearance for electoral "changes" that have no retrogressive effect, if it deems the underlying system discriminatory or thinks that an alternative system would put minorities in a better position. The only authority it claims for this position is an ambiguous sentence in a footnote of a Senate committee report on the 1982 amendments to the act and a 1983 dissent by Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Justice's expanded interpretation of its pre-clearance power gives it enormous leverage. By denying or threatening to deny pre-clearance, the department can demand changes in governance that it otherwise lacks the authority to require. Indefensible section five denials lie behind all of the more outrageous racially gerrymandered legislative districts in recent years. In the 1993 case of *Shaw* v. *Reno*, for example, the Supreme Court decried a 160-mile serpentine district in North Carolina, often no wider than the highway it tracked, as bearing an "uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid." The district was the result of Justice's refusal to pre-clear the state's plan for a single, different district containing a majority of black voters. The state's plan was not retrogressive, but Justice demanded a second black district to maximize minority voting strength. Rather than going to court to contest the denial, the state created the 160-mile-long monstrosity along with another majority-black district.

Likewise, the Louisiana Legislature carved a huge "Z" across the state after Justice refused to pre-clear its plan for only one black district. Again, the state's plan was valid under the Voting Rights Act. This time the department even provided the blueprint for the second, so-called "Zorro," district. In 1993 a federal court in Louisiana sharply rebuked the department for its tactics: "What was the authority for the [department's] insistence [on a second black district]? The answer presents itself: none. . . . [The department] arrogated the power to use Section 5 pre-clearance as a sword to implement forcibly its own redistricting policies, rather than as a shield to prevent lamentable historical abuses."

The policies Justice seeks to impose violate the most important limiting principle in the Voting Rights Act itself. The act expressly rejects a right of minorities to be "elected in numbers equal to their proportion in the population." Nevertheless, all of Justice's maneuvers under section five have had proportional representation as their goal.

To buttress its denial of pre-clearance in the New York case, Justice unfolded a bizarre argument in court regarding the state's purpose in adding the new judges. Section five prohibits electoral changes that have either the effect or the purpose of diminishing minority voting rights. Justice claimed that the legislative purpose of adding the new judges was to discriminate against minorities. Its reasoning was as follows: The New York Legislature knew or should have known that the judicial nominating system was biased against minorities. When the Legislature added judgeships, it deliberately chose not to change the nominating system to a non-biased alternative. Its purpose in adding judgeships, therefore, was to diminish minority voting rights further.

New York, in its defense, produced numerous affidavits, many from minority legislators, stating that the only purpose behind the additional judgeships was easing the crisis in the city's court system. No one thought about race or about altering the selection system.

Justice's argument is a sleight-of-hand strategy for ascribing racial intent when none exists. Its implications are enormous: Justice can tar local governments with intentional racism if they do not take a course of action that in Justice's view would improve minorities' political power.

The argument also rests on a militant disregard for how government works. "When you add ten judges, you decide how to elect them," says John Tanner, former acting chief of the voting rights section of the civil rights division. In fact, you don't. If an existing selection system is in place, you use it automatically, absent strong reasons not to. To put the onus on government to revisit first principles every time it makes a decision would produce legislative paralysis.

Though the D.C. District Court usually sides with the Justice Department in voting rights

A Hundred-Headed Hydra

Although the federal government has decided not to pursue its section five action against New York further, New York's judicial voting rights nightmare has only just begun. Two more Voting Rights Act cases loom. The left-wing Center for Constitutional Rights—best known for its lead attorney, William Kunstler—has filed a suit seeking single-member districts, set for trial in December; its costs and complexity will dwarf those of the Justice Department proceeding. And Assemblyman Herman D. Farrell Jr., Manhattan Democratic Party leader, filed another voting rights complaint this April challenging the appointment of acting Supreme Court justices. Like the center's suit, Farrell's action is intimately related to Justice's pre-clearance crusade.

The issue in Justice's case was the validity of elected Supreme Court justices. But the Justice Department had denied pre-clearance for appointed justices as well. New York ignored that denial, on the ground that the Voting Rights Act applies only to elective positions. Justice did not press the point but may simply have passed the baton to Farrell.

Appointed Supreme Court justices have become essential to the functioning of the criminal justice system in New York. The New York Constitution ties the number of elected Supreme Court justices in a county to the county's population. In New York City the demand for additional justices long ago exceeded the constitutional allotment. To get around that cap, the governor transfers judges from other courts to serve as acting Supreme Court justices—positions that can last a lifetime. Today over half of the city's Supreme Court justices are acting justices. Says Richard Price, acting judge in the Bronx: "Without me or my colleagues, cases would be five to seven years old by the time they got to court."

In 1982 and 1990, the State Legislature created 27 Court of Claims judgeships—appointed positions—for the sole purpose of transfer to the city's Supreme Courts. Justice denied pre-clearance for those judgeships on the ground that a de facto shift to a judicial appointment system discriminates against minorities. Now Farrell is making the identical point in a New York district court and is using materials gathered by the Justice Department in its section five suit. In a pretrial hearing on May 24, Farrell's attorney told the court that he would submit the same affidavits that Justice had presented to the D.C. court to show discriminatory purpose on the part of the Legislature.

Should the state lose its ability to transfer judges to the Supreme Court, the effect on the city's courts would be catastrophic. The legal implications of Justice's and Farrell's argument against appointed judges are equally troubling. Many court reformers favor a merit-based judicial appointment system. Farrell and Justice seem to argue that the Voting Rights Act prohibits any shift from an electoral to a judicial appointment process, a wholly unjustified expansion of the act that encroaches on legitimate state prerogatives of judicial reform.

cases, this time it refused to go along. On December 22, 1994, the court ruled in favor of New York, delivering a resounding defeat to the Justice Department. Section five, said the court, is limited to an inquiry into the retrogressive effect of a proposed change; the merits of the underlying system are irrelevant. Moreover, the argument that legislators were or should have been aware of discriminatory effect, the court said, does not give rise to an inference of discriminatory purpose. "The [U.S.] has failed to identify a single fact which would suggest that the decision to create additional judgeships was motivated by a discriminatory purpose," wrote the court. The court refused as well to obligate the state to revisit its judicial selection system every time it added judges: "The Supreme Court has recognized that a state has a legitimate interest in maintaining the continuity of its existing electoral system."

You would think that so unambiguous a defeat would have ended the matter. But Justice was undaunted. Said John Tanner of the voting rights section after the District Court ruling: "We continue to feel that [the addition of] judges was done for a discriminatory purpose. Both the choice and the method of election were motivated by race." And so the division immediately filed a motion for reconsideration, which it lost on March 16, 1995.

A month later the department appealed the case to the Supreme Court—which has never supported any standard for section five other than retrogression. Sensibly, on June 5, Solicitor General Drew Days III instructed the department to withdraw its appeal. "There was no disagreement as to whether our legal position was correct," says Richard Jerome of the voting rights section. "But the solicitor general decided that this was not the best case [factually] to present the issues"—an understatement if ever there was one.

> **"To vest power over the workings of government in the architects of such a theory is a profound mistake."**

Koppell estimates that the costs of defending against Justice's assault have been in the "thousands of thousands." Taxpayers have paid both sides' costs—money that could have been spent on judges' salaries, increased jail space, and more police.

To the Justice Department, the New York battle was just a skirmish in a broader war for racial proportionality on the bench. Nearly identical cases from Texas and Arizona await decision from the D.C. District Court; either of those cases, says Jerome, could end up in the U.S. Supreme Court. Justice is also engineering minority "representation" on courts in Alabama and Monterey, California.

As for future judicial pre-clearance cases, according to Jerome, the department will pursue the very theories about the Voting Rights Act that the court rejected in the New York dispute. "We will continue to find discriminatory purpose if the state was aware of the discriminatory nature of its election system and rejected alternatives to that system."

Justice's discriminatory purpose theory is reason alone to close down the department's voting rights section—or, ideally, the whole civil rights division. Only a set of attorneys possessed by blind fanaticism and indifferent to the reality of urban court systems could propound the argument that governments today authorize new judgeships in order to diminish minority voting rights. To vest power over the most fundamental workings of government in the architects of such a theory is a profound mistake.

It is time, too, to take a hard look at what the Voting Rights Act has become. Like many laws from the civil rights revolution—from *Brown* v. *Board of Education* to the Civil Rights Act of 1964—the act was born out of a noble purpose and met an urgent need. Yet it was subsequently twisted almost beyond recognition. Congress did not intend to impose racial quotas on the courts or force states to run to Washington for approval every time they add a new judge. Now that the country is openly questioning racial quotas in employment and education, it should not ignore the most consequential quotas of all: those in the courts and legislatures. •

Urbanities

The Triumph of Rockefeller Center

David Garrard Lowe

By now the tale of how the Mitsubishi Estate Company forced Rockefeller Center to file for bankruptcy has been more than twice told. But this is by no means Rockefeller Center's first reversal of fortune. Indeed, the story of the center's inception and construction is high drama—a saga of financial boom and bust, critical derision, and splendid perseverance.

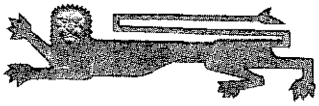
Great cities have places that encapsulate their very essence. One thinks immediately of the Mall in London, the Admiralty Arch behind one and, in the distance, Aston Webb's Buckingham Palace, in the Louis XVI style as interpreted by 1912 England. Or the Place de la Concorde in Paris, the whole square symbolizing France's perpetual attempt to rationalize language, life, and design. In New York the authentic heart of the metropolis is undoubtedly Rockefeller Center. Turning in from Fifth Avenue to the Channel Gardens, one moves away from the roar of traffic and enters something very rare in American cities, a precinct of planned space, with sunlight and the plash of water. In its subtle combination of luxury and business, of commerce and art, Rockefeller Center achieves—effortlessly, it seems—what most of Gotham yearns for. In fact, when, on March 5, 1931, a tentative model for the project was unveiled, it was greeted by almost universal hisses. "Radio City is ugly. Its exterior is revoltingly dull and dreary," the *Herald Tribune* proclaimed. The *New York Times* was equally dismissive, calling the maquette a composition of "architectural aberrations." Many alterations would be made in those original plans, but their reception is worth remembering: it signifies how formidable the task was that preceded the acclaimed urban masterpiece now occupying the land stretching from Fifth to Sixth avenues and from 48th to 51st streets.

To begin with, it was something of a miracle that 12 acres of underdeveloped property with a single ownership existed in midtown Manhattan in the twentieth century. The tale behind this phenomenon stretches back to the infancy of the nation. Dr. David Hosack, a native New Yorker, combined brilliance and irresistible charm with a fine medical education received in America and the British Isles. His diagnostic insight during New York's terrible yellow fever epidemic of 1797, when he was among the first to recognize that fever as a distinct disease, led to his being taken into partnership by the dean of the city's doctors, Samuel Bard. Hosack was to prove to be a pioneer in American medicine, a severe critic of the almost universal practice of bleeding patients, an early advocate of vaccination, and one of the first physicians in this country to use a stethoscope. Alas, his impressive medical skills could not save the life of his friend Alexander Hamilton, whom he accompanied to the fatal duel in Weehawken, New Jersey, in 1804.

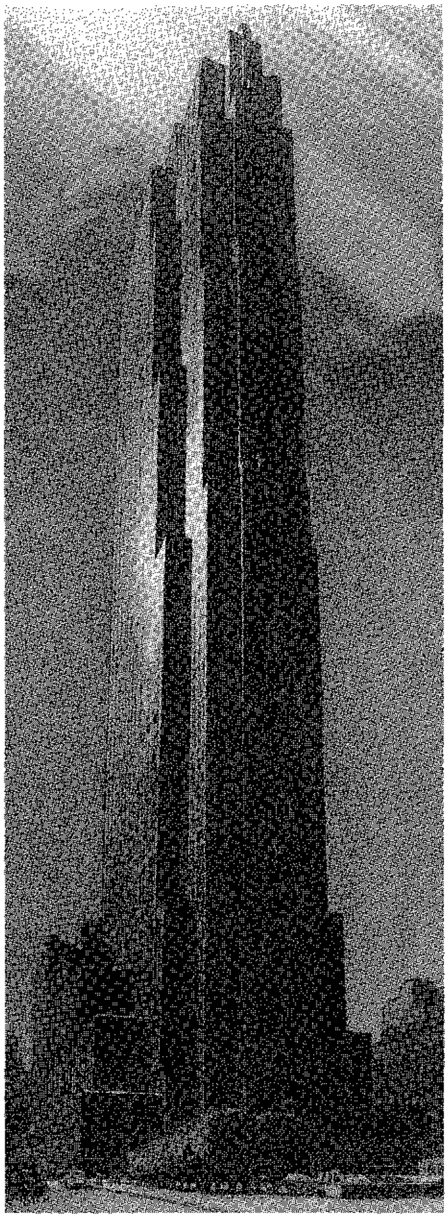
Hosack was also a firm believer in the curative power of plants and was professor at Columbia College of both botany and materia medica, the study of the composition of medical remedies. His dream was to establish a botanical garden in New York that would rival the great ones of Europe, such as the Jardin des Plantes in Paris or Kew Gardens in London. When his efforts to have either Columbia or the State of New York underwrite his project failed, Hosack decided to take on the task himself. His efforts to find a suitable site led him to 20 acres lying between the Middle Road on the east (now Fifth Avenue) and the Albany Road to the west (now Sixth Avenue), which were part of the common lands. Because the tract was rocky and lay some three miles north of the built-up part of Manhattan Island, the city fathers were glad to be rid of it. In 1801, Dr. Hosack agreed to pay $4,807.36 in cash, plus a quitrent of 16 bushels of wheat a year. In 1810 he paid another $285.71 in commutation of the quitrent and thus owned the property outright.

Hosack christened his demesne "The Elgin Botanical Garden", after his father's native town in Scotland, and he set about turn-

Photographs courtesy of Rockefeller Center. ©Rockefeller Group, Inc. 1995.



ing the tract into one of the wonders of New York. He enclosed the garden within a seven-foot-high stone wall, constructed hothouses and a greenhouse, laid out elaborate beds for herbs and flowers, and brought in some 2,000 rare plants from all over the world. Hosack, characterized by a fellow physician as "a man of profuse expenditure"—his Saturday evening parties were famous for their talk and the quality of the wine—had soon spent more than $100,000, an astonishing sum. When his expectations that his costs would be offset by the sale of medicinal plants and the products of his nursery came to nought, he turned again for help to Columbia and the state. But once more he was turned down, and in 1810, the very year that he had made his final payment on the property, he ended up selling it to the State of New York for $75,000. Without Hosack's loving care and his money, the garden quickly deteriorated. Fences and buildings fell into disrepair; rare plants disappeared. Within four years of the transfer, Hosack's Eden had become an eyesore.

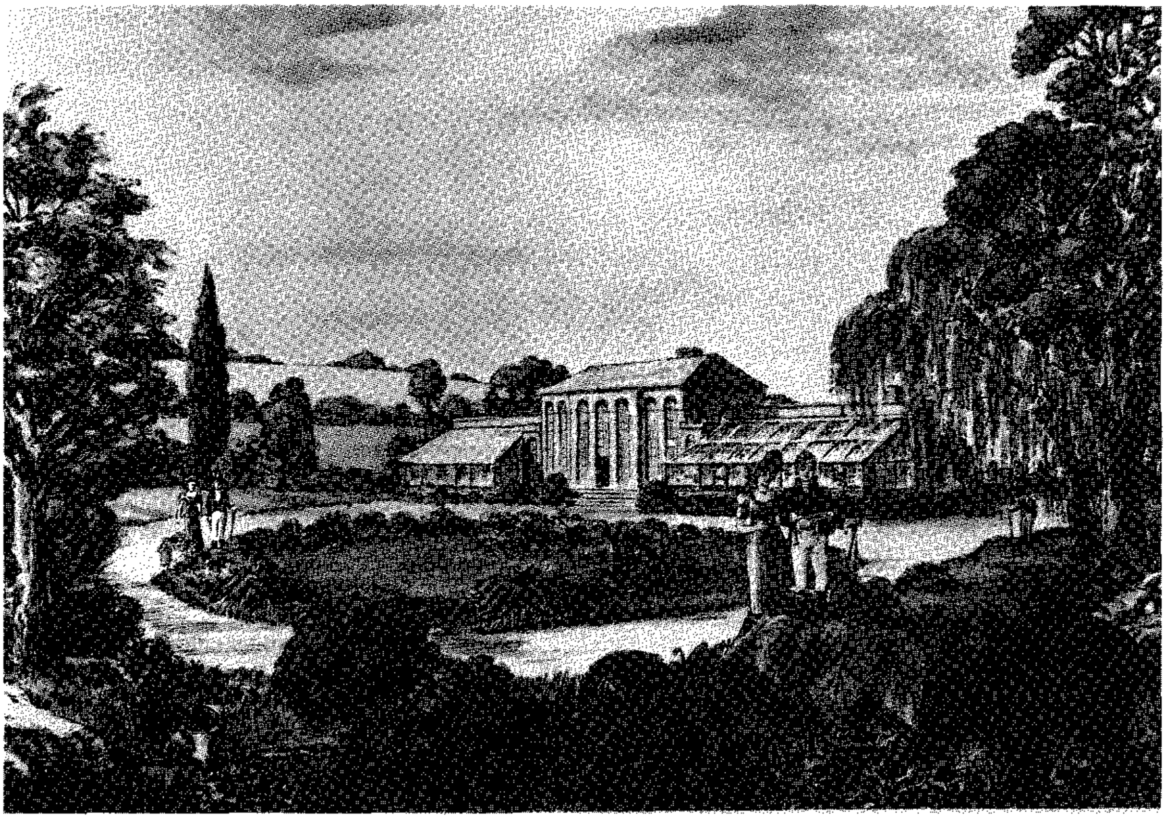


What they envisioned in 1931.

The subsequent linkage to Columbia, which was to keep the site together, had little to do with Dr. Hosack. The college, located on what it called its "Lower Estate" on Park Place between Church Street and Broadway, had long sought financial aid from the state. But while other educational and even religious institutions had received help, Columbia had been regularly rebuffed—because, some said, of its close association before the Revolution with the Tory Anglican Church. In 1814 the State of New York organized a lottery to help Union and Hamilton Colleges, and, once again, turned down Columbia when it asked for a share of the proceeds. But the Legislature, seeing a way to be rid of Dr. Hosack's decrepit botanical garden while offering at least something to Columbia, presented the tract to the college. Columbia's trustees, who'd been seeking money to finance a move from the cramped quarters that had housed the college since its founding in 1754, felt that once more they'd been shortchanged.

Until 1828 they were correct. In that year Columbia found a long-term tenant for the property who would pay cash. By the 1850s, when Columbia finally decided to make its move uptown, the property, now assessed at $550,000, had grown too valuable for the college to build on. Instead, Columbia bought the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb's building on Madison Avenue between 49th and 50th streets and settled there in 1857.

To help pay for the move, Columbia sold 16 lots at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 48th Street for $40,000 to the Collegiate Church of St.



In the early nineteenth century, the Elgin Botanical Garden stood at the Rockefeller Center site.

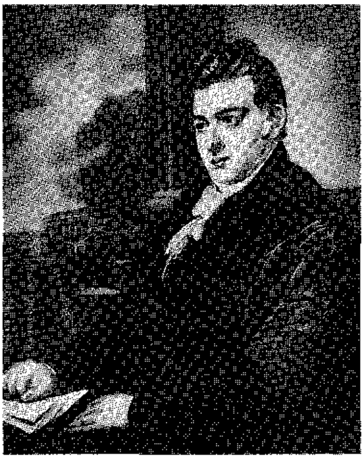
Nicholas. It divided the rest of the property into 272 lots and rented them under 21-year leases, renewable for an additional 21 years. Columbia had the right to purchase the buildings at a fair price if either the college or the tenant failed to renew. Four decades later, to finance its 1897 migration to its grandiose new McKim, Mead & White campus in Morningside Heights, Columbia sold one block of its "Upper Estate" between 47th and 48th Streets for $3 million, reducing the tract to just under 13 acres.

During the real estate boom that engulfed Manhattan in the 1870s, Columbia's Upper Estate flourished. Along Fifth Avenue, four- and five-story stone-fronted houses sprang up, while in the cross streets behind them rose uniform rows of modest brownstones. By the dawn of the twentieth century, most of the Fifth Avenue residences had been converted to shops and offices, and while the brownstones close to Fifth Avenue continued to be desirable, those to the west, near the clamor of the Sixth Avenue elevated, had declined into rooming houses. By the 1920s the college's property had degenerated into a notorious district of speakeasies and brothels.

Yet this black cloud had a silver lining. Most of the leases on the property were due to run out between 1928 and the end of the decade. With the stock market reaching new highs every day and New York in the midst of an unprecedented building boom, Columbia envisioned a bonanza from the redevelopment of its midtown property.

At the center of these plans was the Metropolitan Opera, housed since 1883 in what was called "the yellow brewery," an ugly brick structure occupying the block bounded by Broadway, Seventh Avenue, and 39th and 40th streets. Prodded by its most powerful board member, Otto Kahn, a partner in the prestigious Kuhn, Loeb investment bank, the opera was considering building a more glamorous house in a more fashionable neighborhood. In January 1926 Kahn presented the opera's board of directors with a memorandum that outlined a plan to finance the move. With the Coolidge boom showing no sign of abating, Kahn estimated that the opera could sell its old property for $12 million and that a new house would cost $8.5 million to build, leaving $3.5 million for the purchase of land. In addition, Kahn proposed to combine the opera house with a large office building whose rents would help subsidize the company's operating costs. He secured a site on West 57th Street, and the opera board hired the eminent architect Benjamin Wister Morris and the designer Joseph Urban to work up plans. They produced a striking opera house and office building in a dazzling French Art Deco style. But the West 57th Street location soon proved to be too cramped for an ever more ambitious project.

John Tonnele, a vice president of the highly respected real estate firm of William A. White & Company, got wind of the opera's plan to move to a more elegant quarter. His company was Columbia's advisor on the development of its Upper Estate, and an opera house immediately struck him as the ideal magnet to attract upscale tenants to the property. Inspired by the prospects of the expanded site, Morris sketched a grand structure fronting a plaza. Surrounding the opera house the architect envisioned seven other buildings—hotels, apartment houses, and department stores—all linked by a promenade and set amid gardens and fountains. The prototype of what was to become Rockefeller Center had been born. The only missing component now was a Rockefeller, and that key piece of the puzzle was about to be added.



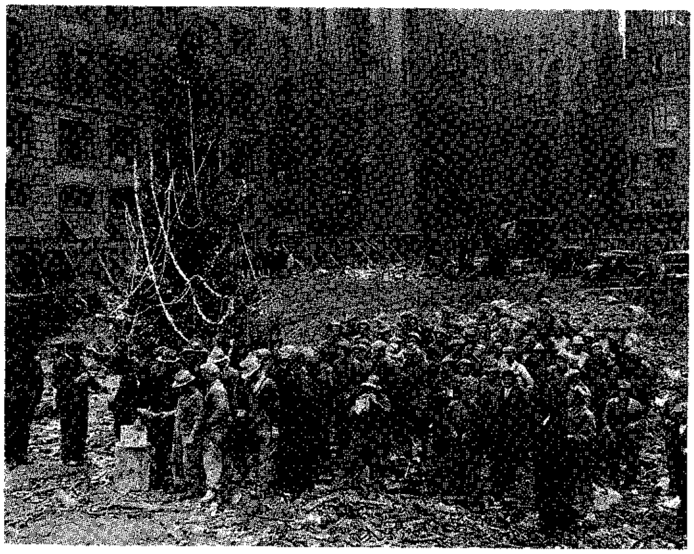
Dr. David Hosack

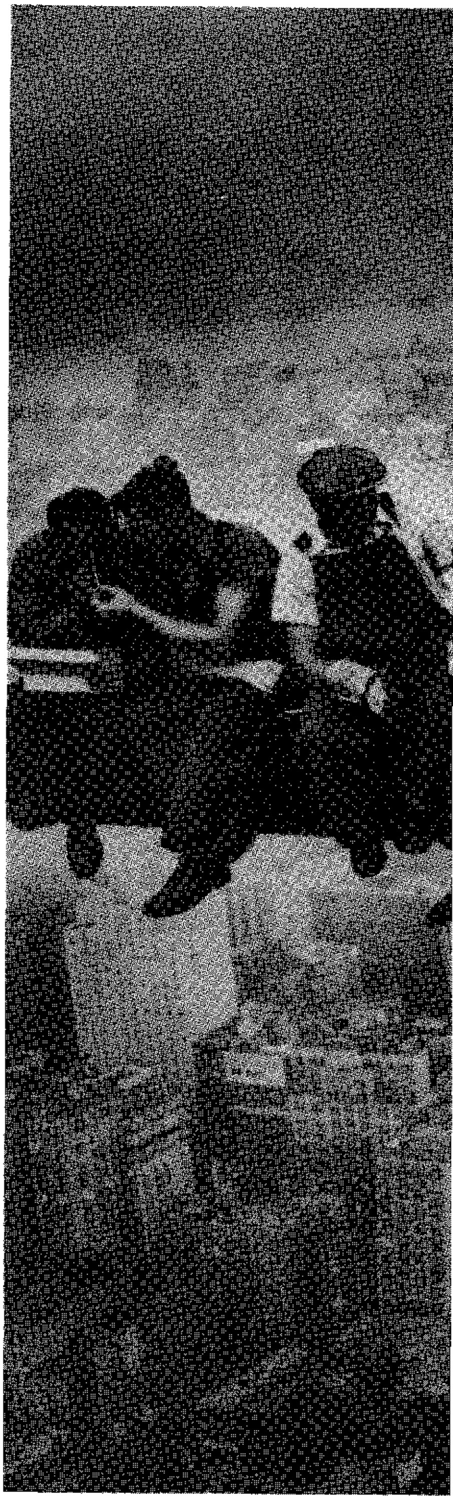
In order to spur interest in the project, on May 21, 1928, Kahn and the other Metropolitan Opera directors hosted a dinner at the sumptuous Metropolitan Club on Fifth Avenue. They invited some of the city's richest men, including John D. Rockefeller Jr., son of the founder of Standard Oil. He was not able to attend, but Ivy Lee, the public relations genius who worked for him, did attend. Four days after the dinner, Lee sent Rockefeller a memo noting that, with the opera house as its focal point, the Upper Estate site could become "the most valuable shopping district in the world."

Intrigued, Rockefeller initially expressed interest merely in joining a large syndicate, which would take over the leases of the Upper Estate for 99 years. When the idea of such a syndicate failed to attract backers, Rockefeller began thinking of taking on the entire project alone. In his typical methodical and astute manner, he consulted separately five of New York's top real estate specialists and asked them, if he did assume the leases, how much he could expect to realize on subleases to those who would erect their own buildings on the site. The estimates ranged from slightly more than $3 million to more than $5 million a year. All five, Rockefeller later noted, considered the project "a sound one and good business."

Another consideration was at work here too. The Rockefellers lived on West 54th Street just north of the Columbia property. For a tee-

ROCKEFELLER CENTER





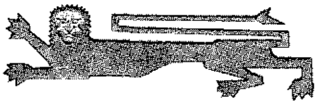
Workers receive their pay beside Rockefeller Center's first Christmas tree on Christmas Eve 1931 (above); and (right) have lunch 800 feet above the ground on an RCA Building girder.

Architects Raymond Hood (left), Wallace Harrison (center) and Andrew Reinhard.

totaler and strong supporter of Prohibition, a good Baptist who taught Sunday school, the opportunity to level saloons and houses of ill repute must have been almost irresistible. "The plan commended itself to me," Rockefeller observed, "as a highly important civic improvement."

Rockefeller quickly opened his own negotiations with Columbia and by the summer of 1928 reached an agreement giving him the right to buy part of the Upper Estate for $6 million and to lease the rest for 21 years at $3.3 million a year. He also received the option of three renewals of 21 years each. An appraisal valued the property at $62 million.

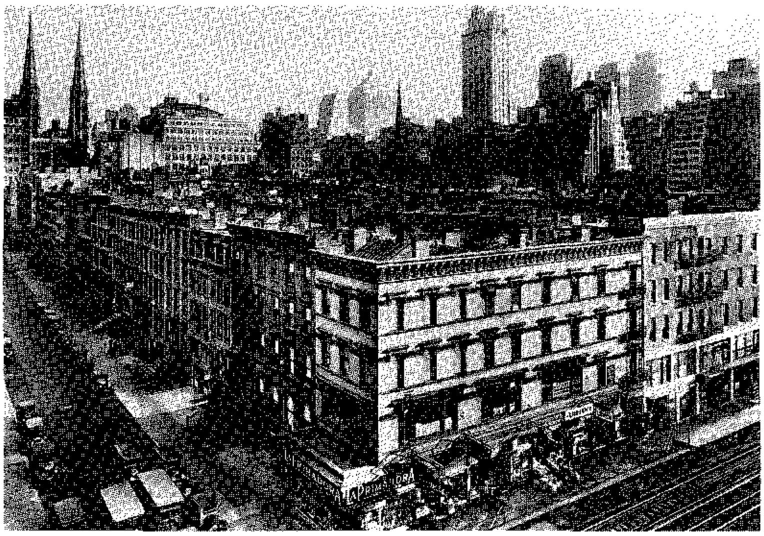
The Rockefellers have always had the habit of seeking out the best advice on any subject—and heeding it. Now John D. Rockefeller Jr. turned to John R. Todd, the attorney who headed the Todd & Brown engineering firm. He was a man who understood the complexities of urban construction and of matching the right client to a property as few men did. It was Todd who now brought in L. Andrew Reinhard and Henry Hofmeister, the first architects of the team that actually constructed Rockefeller Center. Both were in their late thirties. Hofmeister specialized in ventilation, plumbing, and the arrangement of interiors, while Reinhard was both a designer and a top-notch draftsman. Working over the summer, by September 1928 they produced proposals that became known in the history of Rockefeller Center as "The Labor Day Plans." The mix of structures included office tow-



ers, a 37-story hotel, and a 35-story apartment building.

That autumn, lawyers crafted the formal agreement, and on January 22, 1929, the distinguished longtime president of Columbia, Nicholas Murray Butler, publicly announced the details. The *New York Times* reported that the ensemble, with its open plaza, exclusive shops, and cafés, was reminiscent of Paris's Place de l'Opéra. John D. Rockefeller Jr. wrote later that he never for a moment thought that he would be responsible for any construction. Others, he believed, "would develop and finance their own building programs as the opera proposed to do."

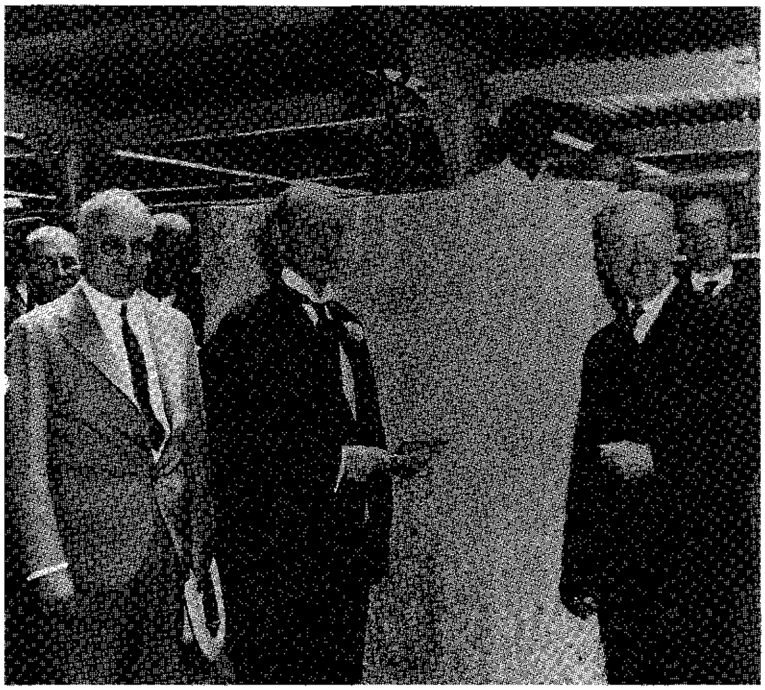
With the agreement in place, the pace of the project began to pick up. Rockefeller, with the advice of the eminent architects John Russell Pope and William T. Aldrich, invited several other leading architects to submit designs by May 1929—designs that all who signed subleases would have to follow in putting up their buildings. Two of the architects chosen, Raymond M. Hood and Wallace K. Harrison, had a profound influence in shaping Rockefeller Center. Hood, a Rhode Islander educated at Brown, was the center's supreme aesthetician. Like such seminal American architects as Richard Morris Hunt, H. H. Richardson, and Charles F. McKim, Hood had studied architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Then—and significantly—he had worked in the office of America's leading practitioners of the Gothic Revival style, Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson. In 1922 he had won the competition to design the new *Chicago Tribune* headquarters, beating out Eliel Saarinen's avant-garde entry with a 36-story Gothic skyscraper, which, after years of being ridiculed by the modernists, is now widely recognized as one of the nation's most beautiful commercial buildings.



West 51st Street and Sixth Avenue just before demolition.

Raymond Hood's mastery of Gothic design strongly appealed to Rockefeller. That style was the family's usual choice for public commissions: perhaps the supreme example of Gothic Revival in the Midwest, their Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at the University of Chicago by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue had just been completed, and now John D. Rockefeller Jr. was deeply involved in the construction of Allen & Collen's splendid French Gothic–inspired Riverside Church, the family's home church. Gothic was Rockefeller's first choice for the new project. Though he was overruled, he gained one small victory: the parapet outside his 56th-floor office window—the one architectural detail he would see when he looked up from his desk—was Gothic Revival.

Wallace Harrison, a 35-year-old from Massachusetts, had also studied at the École des Beaux-Arts. He'd been a draftsman in the fabled firm of McKim, Mead & White and was currently the junior partner of noted architect Harvey Wiley Corbett. Harrison had two important advantages over the other architects working on the project: he'd been a draftsman for Raymond Hood and thus was close to the master architect of the center, and he was married to the sister-in-law of John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s only daughter. Harrison had a long career before him, designing, with his partner, Max Abramovitz, the trademark Perisphere and Trylon at the 1939 New York World's Fair and going on to exhibit a stunning decline in taste with his banal opera house at Lincoln Center and the Brobdingnagian Albany Mall, which was built under the sponsorship of another Rockefeller.



John D. Rockefeller Jr. (with trowel) lays the cornerstone.

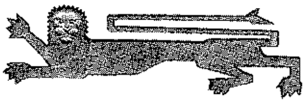
During the summer of 1929 the architects, lawyers for the Metropolitan Opera, and Rockefeller's advisors held numerous meetings, some at the Rockefeller summer home in Maine, to discuss architectural details and plans. Those involved found Rockefeller an astute judge of their proposals. He delighted in studying blueprints and would frequently pull out the four-foot folding rule he carried in his hip pocket to gain an accurate idea of what the scale of a room, an open space, or a building would be when completed.

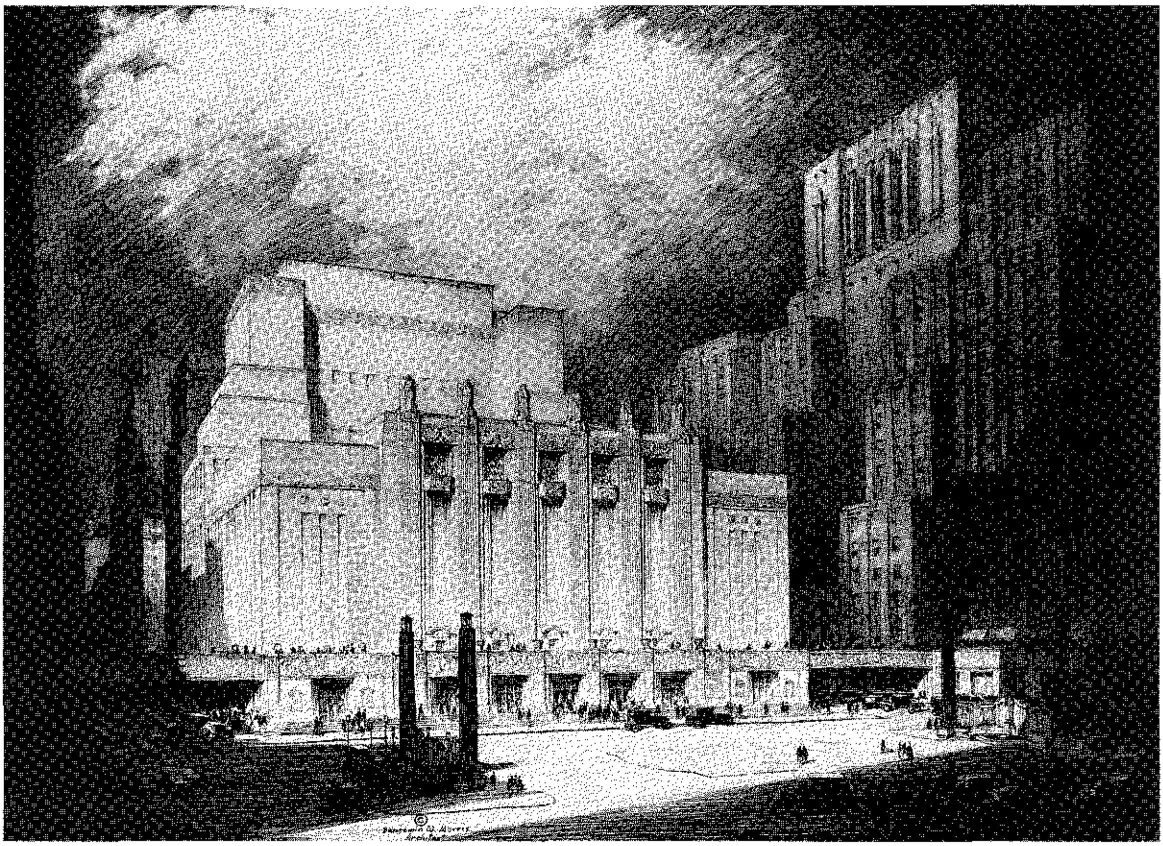
By October the preliminary drawings for the project had been finished. Benjamin Wister Morris was the architect of the opera house, and the other architects—Reinhard, Hofmeister, Corbett, Harrison, and Hood—had charge of all the other structures. The magnitude of the undertaking now began to dawn fully upon the participants. With its 14 major buildings, this was the largest private development the world had ever seen. It was not only the scale of the project that gave some of the participants pause: getting control of the leases on the old Upper Estate had taken longer than expected, and not a single sublease had been signed.

Everything, though, was about to change. On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. In the wake of the millions lost that day, the plans for the Upper Estate would be completely transformed.

The first casualty was the opera. With its old property plunging in value and Otto Kahn's health failing, there was no chance the opera company could raise the funds for a new house. Indeed, by 1933 the opera was on the brink of extinction, its season cut to 14 weeks, the shortest in the history of the company. What the opera left behind for the planners was both the vision of focusing the project on a central imposing edifice and the concept of an open plaza.

Rockefeller was determined to proceed. He had little choice. As he observed afterward: "The general financial situation was so steadily getting worse that there was no possibility of subletting unimproved, as contemplated, any portion of the area.





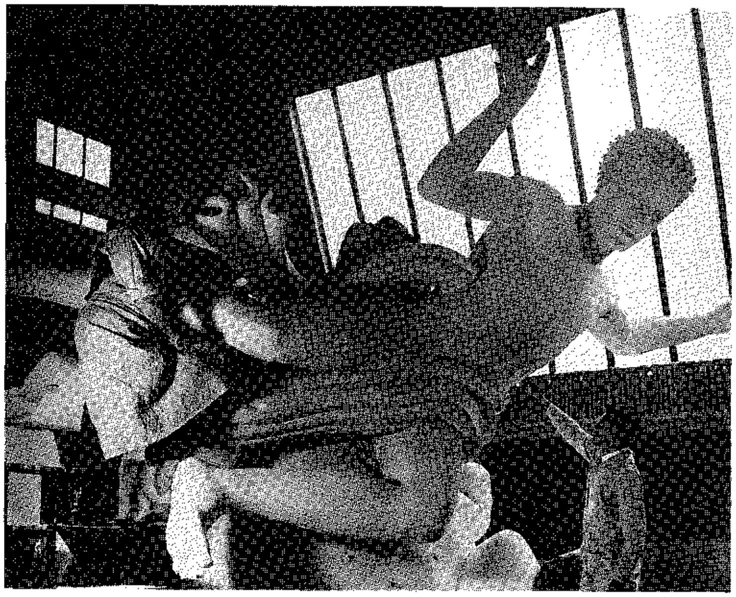
COURTESY METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES

The Depression left Benjamin Morris's Metropolitan Opera House forever on the drawing board.

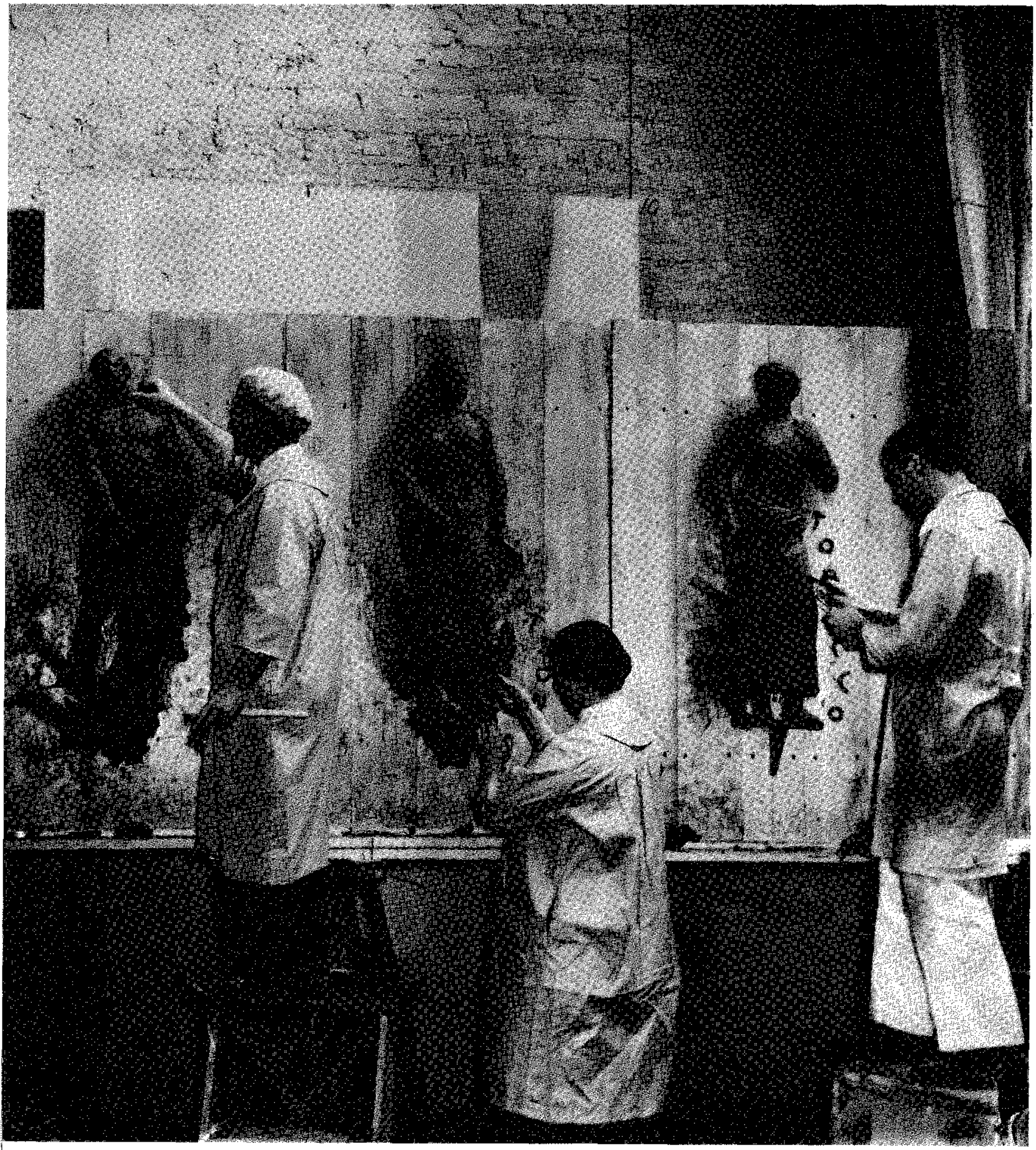
There were only two courses open to me. One, to abandon the entire development. The other, to go forward with it in the definite knowledge that I myself would have to build and finance it alone." Suddenly, instead of being driven by the need for a hall for *Rigoletto* and *Tannhauser*, the enterprise would become unabashedly a business venture. It would be, in the words of one of its managers, "a commercial center as beautiful as possible consistent with the maximum income that could be developed."

In 1930, bulldozers began clearing the site upon which would rise the structures designed by the team of 30 architects and 120 draftsmen working in the Graybar Building next to Grand Central Terminal. The daunting task of planning for the servicing of and access for wheeled vehicles and pedestrians for 14 buildings was finally accomplished. But the troublesome question of what would replace the opera house as the focus of the complex had not been answered. The answer would come from an unexpected source. That it came at all was mere good luck.

Raymond Hood had been remodeling space on Fifth Avenue for new studios and offices for NBC, where David Sarnoff was pushing the idea that radio could be entertainment for the entire family as well as an important advertising medium. Sarnoff wanted to construct large soundproof auditoriums in which audiences could be seated and recording studios with dust-free control panels. Suddenly



Paul Manship sculpts Prometheus for the sunken plaza's fountain (above), while (right) Carl Paul Jennewein (in beret) and his assistants finish figures for the British Empire Building.



Lee Lawrie (right) admires his limestone relief of Wisdom over the RCA Building door, while (left) workmen assemble his titanic bronze Atlas prior to installation in front of the International Building.

the Rockefeller project looked like the perfect fit for NBC's parent company, the Radio Corporation of America. With its two networks, and its Radio-Keith-Orpheum movie and theater operations, RCA was desperate not only for the facilities Sarnoff wanted but for prime office space and two theaters. For that, RCA was willing to pay more than $4.25 million a year in rent. In the spring of 1930 the new focus of the project became the RCA Building.

The structure presented Raymond Hood with the opportunity to create one of the masterpieces of 1930s Art Deco urban design. That style, which had had its apotheosis in the famed Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925, frankly celebrated the modern world of industry and science, of aluminum and steel, of speed exemplified by the automobile, the airplane, and the sleek ocean liners plying the North Atlantic. Its aesthetics were based on the cubism of Picasso and Leger; its colors—orchids, surprising yellows, reds, and greens—derived from the Fauve painters. By 1930 Hood had shed his Gothic garb for the sleek raiment of the Deco style. That year he proved his mastery of it in his stunning *Daily News* building on East 42nd Street.

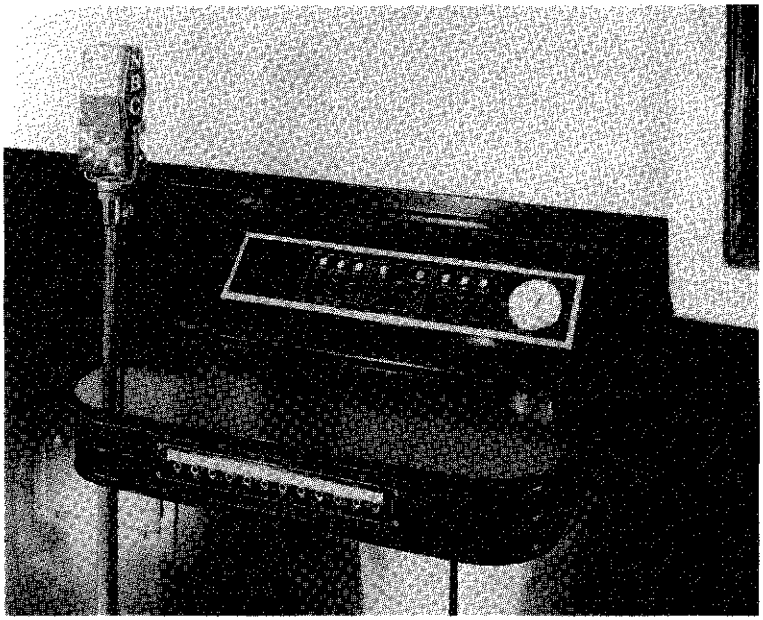
It wasn't only Hood's enthusiasm for the streamlined modernity of Art Deco that overcame Rockefeller's initial yearning after Gothic. Rockefeller's wife, Abby Aldrich, and his son, Nelson, were both avid collectors of contemporary sculpture and painting; indeed, Mrs. Rockefeller was a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. They both came down on the modernist side with all the force family members can bring to bear. In addition, engineer Todd recognized the key economic reality in constructing contemporary buildings. Speaking of the type of architects he sought for the project, Todd commented, "We didn't want men who were too much committed to the architectural past or who were too much interested in wild modernism." What the center desired was "good plans for what we had to have and then to clothe those plans, as simply and attractively as possible, with clean-looking exteriors."

Isamu Noguchi's "News."

Art Deco fitted these specifications perfectly and had one further advantage. It was, above all else, an optimistic architecture, one inspired by the belief that out of the modern laboratory and factory would come a better world. It was an architecture committed to a bold modernity in its materials and forms, but also an architecture ready to embrace embellishment by painting and sculpture. It was a style, whether used afloat in a liner like the *Queen Mary* or ashore in a hotel like the Waldorf-Astoria, that radiated an incontestable belief in progress. And progress would become the theme of every aspect of Rockefeller Center. Hood's 70-story limestone-clad RCA Building, with its rhythmic setbacks expressing both the cubism beloved by Art Deco as well as the declension of its elevator banks, is a hymn to modernity, to a sunny future, to all the good wonders that the twentieth century encompassed. It spoke of power and light and energy.

But the ground it rose upon was not yet, officially, Rockefeller Center. It was no easy task to persuade the diffident John D. Rockefeller Jr. to permit the family name to be used in connection with the development, especially since muckrakers and others had pilloried the family for decades. But once the opera had withdrawn from the project, the designation of "Metropolitan Square" seemed, to say the least, misleading. At the same time, "Radio City" was starting to be applied not only to the RCA Building but to the entire

venture. With other corporations beginning to sign subleases and resisting having another corporation's name as their address, the complex's manager insisted that a new name be found. John Todd pushed for "Rockefeller," but, as Nelson Rockefeller later recalled, his father agreed only after he was persuaded that "this would be a sound thing and a creditable institution." On April 17, 1932, Columbia's Upper Estate finally became Rockefeller Center.

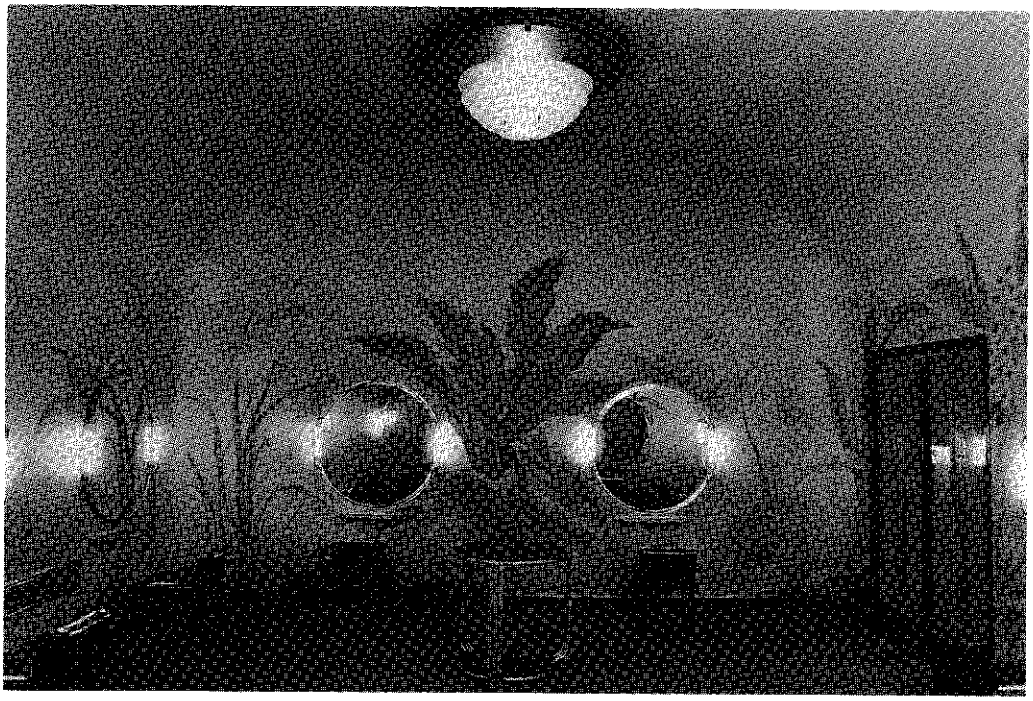


The announcer's console in the NBC broadcast studio in 1947.

It was right that it should be so. It was because of John D. Rockefeller Jr. that the complex was sound and creditable. It was only because he had consented to be personally responsible for repayment that the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company agreed to lend the enterprise $65 million at 5 percent. It was Rockefeller who, in the darkest days of the Depression, kept things going by selling Standard Oil of New York stock, which had been valued at $80 a share a decade earlier, for $2 a share to pay construction expenses. Most significantly, it was Rockefeller who insisted on "the last 5 percent," that is, spending one-twentieth extra to get top quality.

Good taste and finesse inform Rockefeller Center's every aspect, beginning with the buildings' cladding of fine gray Indiana limestone sawed by a special process to texture it, rather than brick as first suggested. They inform the placing of plumbing and storage areas at the core of the structures, so that no working space is more than 27 feet from an outside wall—the farthest that sunlight can penetrate into the interior of a building at New York's latitude. Finesse is evident in the pioneering use of air conditioning and in the elevators, which could whisk people up to the top of the RCA Building at a sensational 1,400 feet a minute and were among the first with electric-eye safety mechanisms. Taste and finesse mark the meticulous maintenance of trees and shrubs and the polished cleanliness of the center's halls and lobbies.

The first chance for the public to see the last 5 percent in Rockefeller Center came on December 27, 1932, when Radio City Music Hall opened its doors. Passing through the restrained black marble ticket lobby, visitors entered the 60-foot-high Grand Foyer, aglow with 29-foot-long crystal chandeliers, tall bronzed glass mirrors, and Ezra Winter's vast, colorful mural, *The Fountain of Youth*. No less sumptuous and dramatic, the lower lobby boasted black mirrored columns, chic club chairs by the noted American Art Deco designer Donald Deskey, and charming murals by Louis Bouché. Even the smaller spaces of the music hall revealed the care taken to carry out every detail to perfection. The circular first mezzanine ladies' lounge, for example, designed by Deskey, employed angled mirrors and round vanity stools to echo the choreographic intricacies of Busby Berkeley.



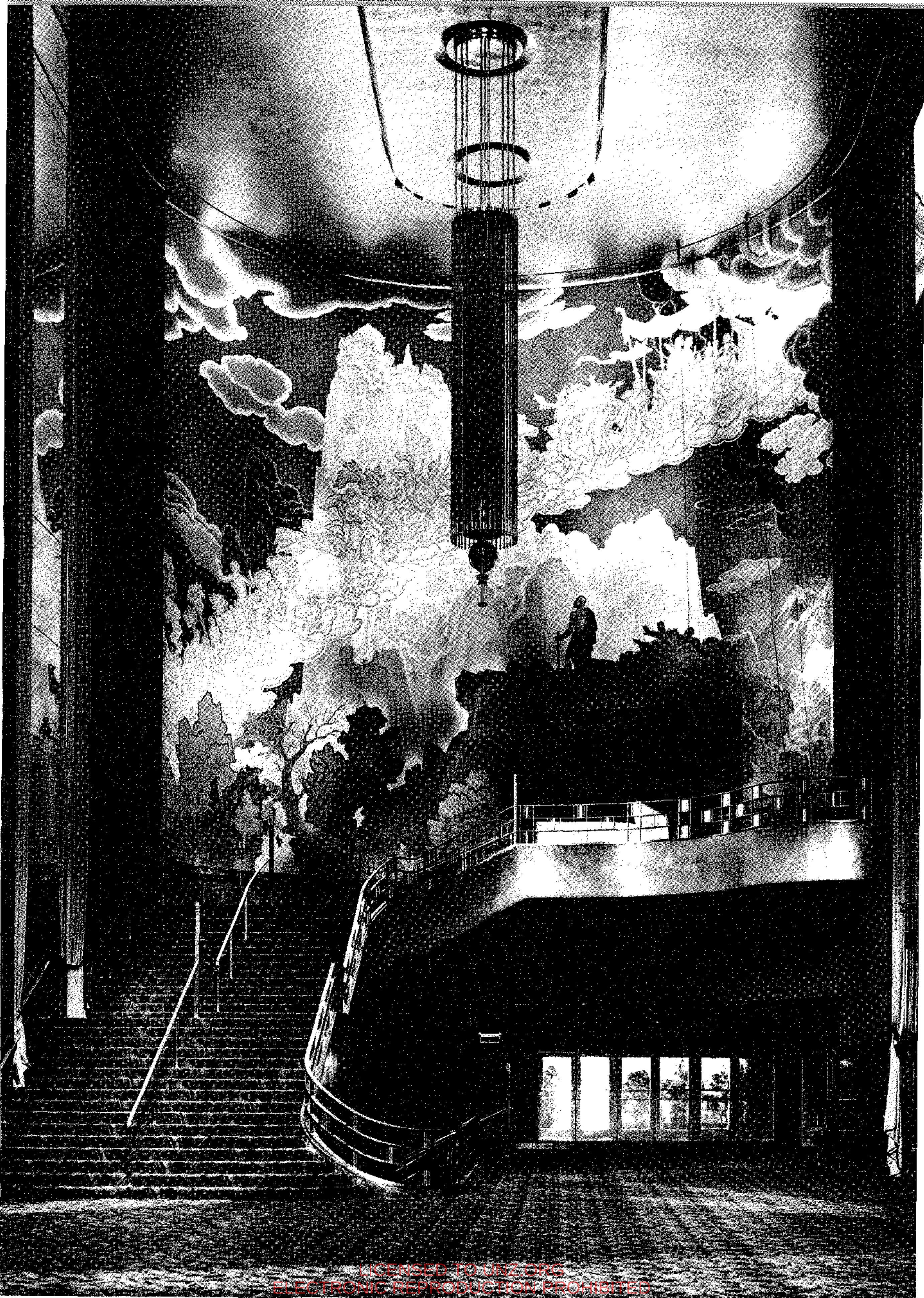
Radio City Music Hall, the world's

largest theater, is an Art Deco

triumph, whether in the coziness

of its powder room (left) or the

grandeur of its lobby.



All of this was but a prelude to the stupendous 6,000-seat auditorium, whose ceiling, consisting of 180-degree arcs of light curving down to the floor, was inspired, the music hall's impresario, Samuel Rothafel, always said, by a sunset he had viewed from the stern of an ocean liner. To perfect the conceit, "Roxy" had the auditorium carpet designed in a pattern of swimming fish. "The great auditorium is beautiful, soul-satisfying, inspiring beyond anything I have dreamed possible," Rockefeller said. It was always his favorite of the center's buildings.

The presence of the work of artists such as Ezra Winter and Louis Bouché at the music hall was not a matter of chance. In 1932, Rockefeller set aside $150,000 for artworks to enhance the center and formed an Advisory Art Committee to find painters and sculptors to make the project "as beautiful as possible." Again, Abby Aldrich and Nelson Rockefeller were two of the moving forces behind this idea. All of the art was to illustrate the general theme of "the progress of man."

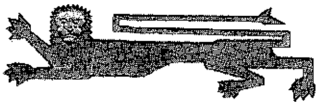
No commercial enterprise on earth can match the center's inventory of painting and sculpture, some 200 individual works by nearly 50 artists. It ranges from Jose Maria Sert's dramatic mural in the lobby of the RCA Building, which replaced the Mexican Marxist Diego Rivera's apotheosis of Lenin with the figures of Emerson and Lincoln, to René Chambellan's spirited bronze dolphins playing in the fountains of the Channel Gardens. Among the center's undoubted masterpieces are Paul Manship's vigorous gilded *Prometheus* in the sunken plaza, Lee Lawrie's awesome *Atlas* before the International Building, and Isamu Noguchi's ten-ton stainless-steel bas relief representing various journalistic skills on the facade of the Associated Press Building.

This prodigal employment of art not only imparts a sense of luxury to the structures but contributes a characteristic Rockefeller Center quality so obvious that it is often overlooked. The writer Jan Morris, as a visitor from the British Isles, perceived it at once in his book *Manhattan 45*: "Rockefeller Center did not seem at all impersonal. . . . It had pleasant cafés in it, and flower beds, and tucked-away roof gardens for the solace of upper-floor office workers, and a sunken plaza they turned into a skating rink in winter. . . . Altogether it was, though undeniably tremendous, a very welcoming, populist sort of development."

Hood and Harrison's alma mater, the École des Beaux-Arts, taught that the first principle in effective urban planning was the axial plan: a street or boulevard or walkway flanked by harmonious structures that leads to a clearly defined focal point. Thus pedestrians are drawn along the thoroughfare, animating the scene and contributing to the pleasure of city life. Paris is filled with such contrivances, preeminently the Champs Elysées moving up to the Arc de Triomphe.

The brilliant decision to place the comparatively low British Empire and La Maison Française buildings at Fifth Avenue on either side of the downward-sloping promenade—dubbed by journalists the Channel Gardens—leading to the upswept fin of the RCA Building, is classic Beaux Arts planning, Gotham's closest approximation to a Parisian boulevard.

The ice skating rink further enhances the vivid sense of urban activity. Its story is another of Rockefeller Center's small miracles. The lower plaza in front of the RCA Building—really nothing more than an entrance to the center's underground shops—proved a problem: it was boring. Pedestrians stayed away, and the shops that opened there almost all failed. When restaurants replaced the shops, diners had little to look at in the static open space. But a surprising solution magically materialized. On a visit to the Rockefellers' hometown of Cleveland, John D. Jr. heard that a local inventor, M. C. Carpenter, had perfected a system for making artificial ice for outdoor rinks. Desperate to try anything to bring life to the lower plaza, on Christmas Day, 1936, the center's managers set up a temporary rink. An imme-



diate success, it became one of Rockefeller Center's most memorable features.

It is due to this axial setting that the Rockefeller Christmas tree has become New York's Christmas tree. Meyer Berger, writing in the *New York Times* on December 25, 1957, superbly expressed its unequaled magnetism: "On Christmas Eve the city glowed. . . . In Rockefeller Center the 65-foot tree from the White Mountains bathed the area all about it with a wondrous glow, and the path to it was lined with tributary trees, cone-shaped and man-made that bloomed in pale green with inner lighting." The prescient social observer Frederick Lewis Allen, writing in the October 1938 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, completely understood the Parisian spirit of Rockefeller Center: "These buildings are not simply huge, efficient, and comfortable. They are also gay."

When, on November 1, 1939, John D. Rockefeller Jr. drove what had been billed as "the last rivet" to complete the steel skeleton of the United States Rubber Building, proclaimed the final structure of the center, he had reason to feel a satisfaction granted to few men. "They all laughed at Rockefeller Center," in the words of the Gershwin tune. Now they were indeed "fighting to get in." The critic Lewis Mumford, who had once fairly sneered at the complex, was preparing to publish in The New Yorker his new assessment that the center was "architecturally the most exciting mass of buildings in the city." In the course of the last rivet ceremony, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia asked Rockefeller to create a few more centers around the city. No wonder: the assessment on the structures in Rockefeller Center had jumped from zero in 1930 to $53,439,400 in 1939.

Nineteen thirty-nine was a year to remember for New York. On the broad Hudson, the *Normandie*, that marvelous advertisement of French Art Deco chic, headed regularly into port, her three strikingly raked funnels giving the impression of movement even when she was riding at anchor. In Flushing Meadows the World's Fair opened, its emblem the gleaming geometry of the Trylon and Perisphere. Within the Perisphere was an exhibition, "The World of Tomorrow," that predicted with certainty that tomorrow would be a much better day. From the RCA studios in the heart of Rockefeller Center, Americans heard Jack Benny's superbly incompetent violin playing and George Burns and Gracie Allen quipping their way through life.

The 1940s would be another story. Before the decade was very old, the glorious *Normandie* would be a burnt-out hulk lying on her side on the Manhattan shore, and the World's Fair would have succeeded in making only one thing better: dining out in New York, immeasurably improved by the war-stranded chefs and waiters from all over Europe. The war touched Rockefeller Center itself when the offices of German, Italian, and Japanese tenants were seized by the FBI.

Following the Second World War, Rockefeller Center leaped westward across Sixth Avenue. But none of the new skyscrapers, including the Time & Life Building from the office of Harrison & Abramovitz, have the architectural quality and panache of the complex's original structures. Compared with the splendid limestone and pleasing decoration of the RCA or the International Building, the center's postwar structures are depressingly ordinary, without a whisper of Beaux Arts planning in the banal public spaces at their bases.

Perhaps this decline was to be expected. The blitz and the blitzkrieg, Auschwitz and the bombing of Rotterdam, left a world shorn of its belief in progress, a world not very certain that tomorrow would be a sunny day. Perhaps no postwar structure could possibly recapture the lambent urbanity, the shimmery elegance of 1939. And perhaps it's too much to expect that another capitalist wizard like John D. Rockefeller Jr. could be found to create an urban Oz upon the hard Manhattan bedrock. •

John D. Rockefeller Jr. insisted

on spending "the last 5 percent"

to assure top quality in materials,

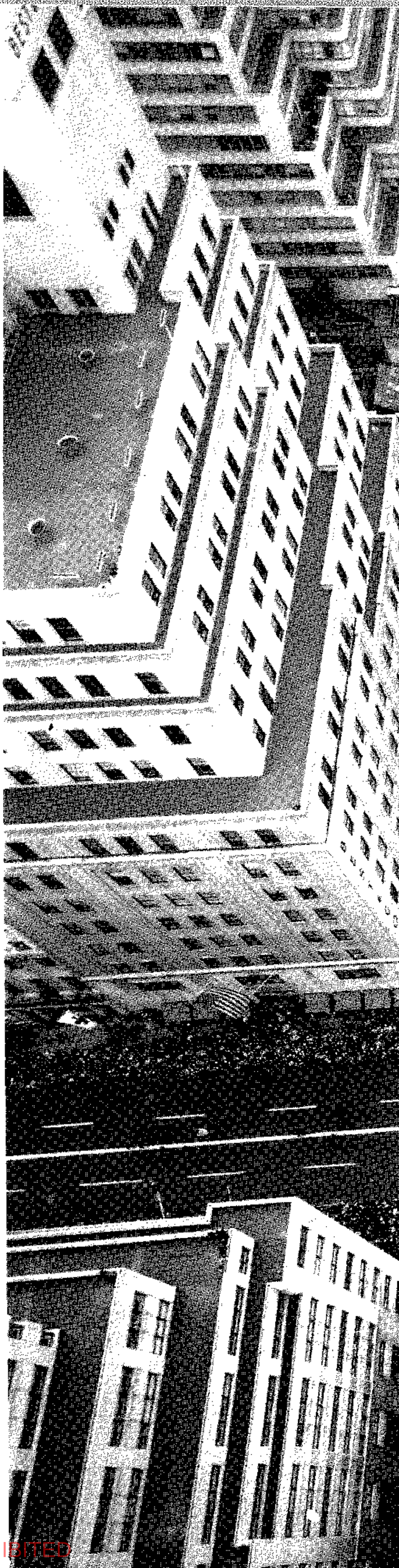
construction, and maintenance.

Here a Rockefeller Center

window washer watches the

St. Patrick's Day parade pass

St. Patrick's Cathedral.



Urbanities

Who Lost Super Bowl III?

Geoffrey Colvin

We can all recite the list: there was Woodstock and the 1968 Democratic Convention and Kent State and *Hair*. The King and Kennedy assassinations. *Soul on Ice*. Close to 30 years after the Great Change in America's culture, authors and filmmakers have pretty well settled on the defining moments of that era and iconized them as definitively as Mount Rushmore. But they've missed a big one. Maybe it seemed trivial in the grand sweep of world historical events. Certainly it was not overtly political or cultural at all. Indeed, it was only a game. But for millions of Americans this three-hour drama made the Great Cultural Change more real, more personal, vital, irrefutable—no joke—than any other. It was Super Bowl III, played on January 12, 1969.

Yes, you're right in recalling that this was one of the most famous football games ever, and it has received tons of media attention over the years. But what hasn't sufficiently been appreciated is the enormous load of symbolic freight it carried, quite accidentally, thanks to the events of the just-ended *annus mirabilis* of 1968. The game slammed many of its millions of viewers hard in the chest, left them dazed and disoriented, because it was an almost perfectly framed ritualized combat between the Old Culture and the New Culture then at war in the larger society. And the New Culture won.

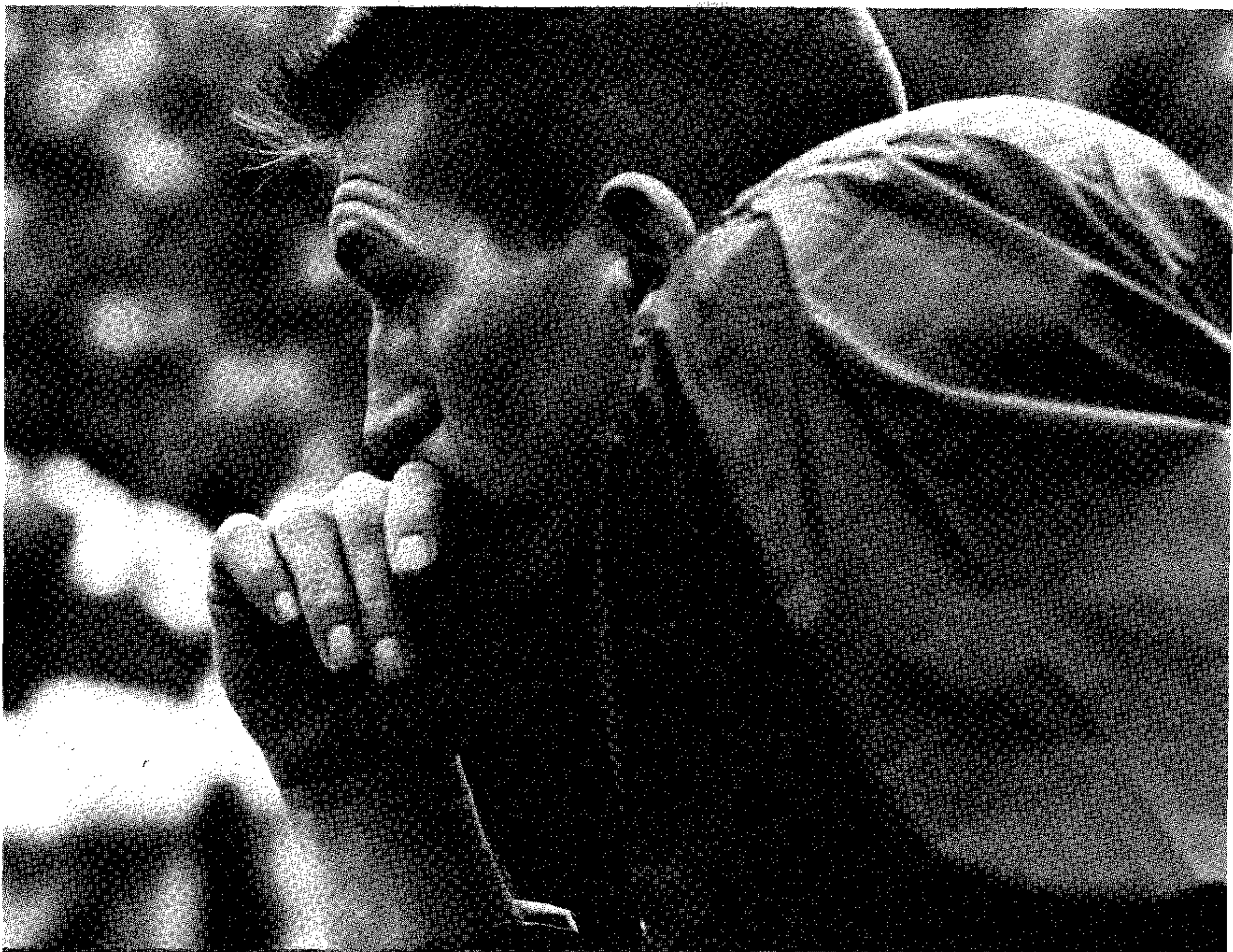
It may seem audacious or just silly to assert that any football game could exert such an effect. It isn't. We all know—even those who haven't felt it have seen it—that for many people sports hold more immediacy and emotional reality than almost any other part of life. When the University of Nebraska won the national college football title this past January, Nebraskans drove hundreds of miles across the state and waited in sub-zero cold outside the college bookstore in Lincoln to buy *Sports Illustrated*'s commemorative issue—at a rate of 10,000 copies an hour. Many people expend more time and passion debating a coach's strategy or a player's value than settling important family matters. Everyone has witnessed (or joined in) acts of craziness—all of them acts of profound, intense identification with a team—that sports fans routinely commit.

Sports reach into ancient parts of the psyche, especially the male psyche, that adore the pureness of the conflict, the formalized battle in which the two sides, symbolizing whatever the fan cares to see in them, fight it out to unambiguous victory and loss. While celebrating aggression, sports also contain it, codify it, give society a safe place to put it. Screaming for one group to beat the living daylights out of another is apparently something we're going to do no matter what. Asking citizens to do it en masse at an appointed hour and place on Sunday afternoon is not only less risky than letting them improvise; it also tells everyone, fans or not, that this form of theatrical violence—as distinct from any other kind—is something the whole community can legitimately participate in.

Deeply different communities provided part of the extra tension of Super Bowl III, when the Baltimore Colts confronted the New York Jets, teams whose very names evoked separate Americas. Baltimore was then a fairly grimy industrial city whose blue-collar Colts fans turned out in huge numbers to cheer players with whom they had at least this in common: they earned a living through punishing physical exertion. The Colts were a large enough part of the city's life that priests on Sunday morning would sometimes request divine assistance for the team that afternoon. No one ever, ever called Baltimore glamorous, and it's a safe bet that most of America almost never even thought of it.

New York, by contrast, was, well, the capital of the world, all flash and excitement, the bright, irresistible focus of most everything big. It made sense that plenty of New

Culture clash: Quarterbacks Johnny Unitas (top) and Joe Namath (bottom, standing)



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BARTON SILVERMAN

Yorkers would identify strongly with the Jets, a brash team in a vigorous young league out to make people notice. Johnny Carson loved to make fun of Mayor Lindsay for calling New York "fun city," but the whole nation laughed because New York was the center. It mattered. Hardly anyone said then that the basis of the U.S. economy was shifting from manufacturing to information and services, but it was—and as it did, no one could miss the sense that Baltimore felt like the past, New York like now.

On this day in January 1969, fans could not help but see a great deal at stake. It's hard now to recall the starkness of the conflict between the Old Culture and the New, or indeed much about the vanquished Old Culture at all. Begin by remembering that the Super Bowl was still a novel concept, and in early 1969 it resonated deeply with many of the turbulent events under way in the society. As a matter of bare facts, the Super Bowl represented simply a successful business being challenged by a promising startup: the National Football League had been around for decades, and in 1960 a few businessmen decided to finance some competition, calling it the American Football League. It became sufficiently popular that an interleague championship game made economic sense. Logical enough. But to the NFL's more numerous and more deeply invested fans, this felt like something more. Identifying in a pre-rational way with their teams, like all sports fans, they saw the established order under assault.

This adrenaline-triggering situation loudly echoed others in the world at large. Cocky young people were speaking confidently about "the Revolution," and while this was obviously nonsense—surely, surely it was nonsense—there had nonetheless been those troubling events at the Democratic Convention in Chicago the previous August, when things had come just that close to getting out of hand. Also there had been similar problems in the streets of Paris the previous May, when the police had seemed by no means in control. Students at Columbia University had taken over the president's office in April; in a memorable photo, a long-haired, mustachioed rebel sat at the president's desk, wearing sunglasses, staring coolly ahead, smoking a cigar, looking just as if he were . . . in charge. For that matter, the North Vietnamese in January had startled the world with their Tet offensive, scoring advances so impressive that Walter Cronkite demanded, on the air: "What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning this war." Plenty of Americans felt the same way. All this had happened in just the previous 12 months. It was worrisome enough to make a person wonder about established orders and whether somehow they were all running out of luck at the same time.

Reading the numerous articles written about Super Bowl III in the weeks before it was played, one is struck by how many of the writers insist, just a bit too confidently, that the AFL is a "minor league," a bunch of third-stringers who can forget about ever matching the NFL. One senses a strong wish to be convinced that the NFL's seemingly natural superiority would be eternal. You want proof? Just look at the first two Super Bowls in which Lombardi's Packers crushed the Kansas City Chiefs and the Oakland Raiders. (The Packers: in our New Culture world, where pro teams are named for sensory pleasures—the Jazz, the Heat, the Magic—it's difficult to summon an earlier age when an important team was christened after men who cut up beef carcasses and put the pieces in boxes.) Of course the Packers, now without Lombardi, wouldn't be playing in Super Bowl III. The Colts were the new league champions, by most accounts even better than the Packers. One could cling to a certain comfort in the NFL's established dominance, just as one could—and many did—in the dominance of the police in Chicago and of the U.S. forces in Vietnam.

Even sharper than the symbolism of the established vs. insurgent leagues was that of the players, two players in particular. People naturally see all conflict as personal. Only in that way does it seize the imagination: Grant vs. Lee, the King vs. the Kaiser, Churchill vs.

Hitler. The battle between the New Culture and the Old in the late sixties shaped up personally in several highly public arenas, gripping people according to their interests: Gene McCarthy vs. Lyndon Johnson, Abbie Hoffman vs. Mayor Daley, Gore Vidal vs. William Buckley. The most innocent and unlikely of these conflicts nonetheless packed huge emotive power in millions of American souls. It pitted Joe Namath against Johnny Unitas.

Namath was the quarterback for that year's presumed punching bag, the AFL champion Jets, and Unitas quarterback (though no longer a starter) for the Colts. Unitas, immovably established as one of the game's all-time greats, otherwise called little attention to himself. Namath was well on his way to greatness and was also a single young man from the sticks suddenly placed in New York City with a lot of money and notoriety. The press couldn't resist him. As a type, neither man was unusual. But the era made them symbols, and in casting an allegory of New Culture vs. Old Culture it would have been hard to do much better.

The largest point of difference between the two cultures was, of course, how they regarded deferral of gratification, which was either the foundation of civilization or a particularly priggish instrument of Establishment oppression. With this central value of the Old Culture under powerful siege, it was impossible not to see its fate being decided, single-combat-style, in this battle of one who embodied it vs. one who emphatically did not.

Unitas was married with four children and lived in a Baltimore suburb. His idea of a pleasant evening was having friends over for his wife's lasagna and coffee afterward. He went to bed early and got up early, partly so he could make it to Mass before practice or a game. His haircut, a flattop, appeared to require about three minutes of the barber's time. Rejection and sacrifice were the themes of his story: growing up poor in Pittsburgh, he earned spending money shoveling coal for 75 cents a ton. His talent was apparent in high school, but Notre Dame and Indiana turned him down before the much less exalted University of Louisville took him on. After college the Pittsburgh Steelers drafted him, then never played him—not once. Dropped from the team, he signed with the semipro Bloomfield Rams for $6 a game. The Colts picked him up there in 1956, and 11 years later, his legend established, he signed a three-year contract at $100,000 a year. His view of the social revolution seemed broadly conventional. "Today they call 'em hippies," he said in 1968. "Ten years ago they were bums." Nearly everything about him was comforting, Eisenhower-era, likable, even admirable. He was one of the last players in football to wear the old high-top black cleats.

Namath lived in a penthouse in Manhattan's East Seventies. He liked staying up late, drinking, and women, and there is very little evidence that he denied himself any of these amusements. He certainly showed up hungover at some practices and probably at some games. He broke training, got into a fight in a bar. When he graduated from Alabama as one of the country's most celebrated college players, the new AFL teams competing with the NFL for talent were pushing salaries up. Namath confided to Alabama coach Bear Bryant that he hoped to get $100,000 a year. On Bryant's advice, he asked the NFL's St. Louis Cardinals for $200,000 and a Lincoln Continental ("I just always wanted one of those cars"). To his amazement, the Cardinals responded within a day: no problem. Thus began bidding that ended with the Cardinals and the Jets both offering an unheard-of $400,000; Namath decided he wanted to live in New York.

Unitas was perfectly clear on how he felt about this, and it was a picture of modesty and high-mindedness. "I've never been one to worry about what the other fellow had, like during the pro war, when some of those college kids were making the big bonuses," he told the *Sporting News* in 1967. "I was all for them getting whatever they could get. I never worried that I wasn't getting it. Some people in life, though, have a loaf of bread under one arm and are unhappy when they see another man who has two loaves of bread." Could he really have been this serene? Maybe. In any case, it was the face he presented to the world.

It was far from what the world saw of Namath. Expressing the if-it-feels-good-do-it ethos then gaining strength, he told an interviewer, "As long as I like something and I feel I'm not hurting myself or somebody else, well, I try to do it." His hair was long; a goatee came and went; he grew a Fu Manchu mustache, then shaved it off when Schick paid him $10,000 to do so on camera. Unitas's tastes differed markedly. "Every boy can't have a lot of money to buy clothes, but at least he can be clean-shaven and neatly dressed," he told groups of high schoolers to whom he regularly spoke. "I can't stand kids with this long hair." Namath's vast wardrobe was urgently mod, and a friend reported he had more shoes than anyone had ever seen (Mrs. Marcos's closet having not yet opened to the public). He was the first player in football to wear white cleats.

If the Old Culture was valuable, if it worked—a matter that seemed suddenly, alarmingly in question throughout the society—then could there be any doubt which of these men would win?

In the NFL loyalist view there was simply no comparison. Unitas was not just the greatest quarterback of the age but also, said many, the greatest of all time. San Francisco 49er coach Jack Christiansen said, very much in the language of the Old Culture, "As long as the Colts have Unitas, they could play with nine or ten girls and still beat other teams." For the September 1968 issue of *Esquire*, the editors asked a friend and teammate of Namath's to write an article based on an interview with him. Then, apparently without telling Namath, they asked a sportswriter named Al Hirshberg to append comments, mostly biting, which were printed in the article's margins. Namath praised Jets coach Weeb Ewbank by noting that, even when angry, he never tried to demean Namath by comparing him unfavorably with other quarterbacks he had coached, including Unitas. To anyone who could distinguish the gods from the groundlings of football, this was breathtaking hubris. Hirshberg asked incredulously: "Is it possible that Joe Namath really believes that Weeb Ewbank ever compared him to Johnny Unitas?"

These two symbolized the cultural conflict of the era in other ways as well. Don't trust anyone over 30? Unitas was 35, Namath 25. As the divorce rate began to rise and some thinkers even questioned the value of conventional families, who would prevail—the devoted family man or the swinging bachelor who said he "would rather go to Vietnam than get married"? Namath didn't go to Vietnam because his famously rickety knees got him classified 4-F; this didn't stop some from calling him a draft dodger. Unitas was too old to be drafted but visited Vietnam in 1967; on his return he reported, "I didn't see any long hair in Vietnam, but I met a lot of heroes."

Then there was deportment. Unitas conformed to the long-standing athletic ideal of an earnest, modest straightshooter: you said sir and ma'am, and as for the opponents, they're a fine team, and we'll certainly do our best against them. Spurred by some Namath remarks just before Super Bowl III, Bubba Smith, the Colts' enormous 23-year-old defensive end, responded with as fine a statement of the old ideal as one will ever hear: "A football player who's real good doesn't have to talk. The Green Bay Packers were real champions. They never talked. They never had to. This is the way I visualize all champions—solemn, dignified, humble. My father coached me at Charlton Pollard High School in Beaumont, Texas, and he taught us to be humble off the field. Inside, I've got to feel I'm the best, but if I tell you I'm the best, then I'm a fool."

Recalling this ideal takes effort. It's easy to believe that sportsmanship has always been a hazy concept among professionals, who after all don't pretend to be playing for anything but money. Yet standards of behavior have decidedly changed, mainly toward self-

UPI/BETTMANN

Namath embodied the if-it-feels-good-do-it ethos of the sixties.

indulgence. By now we're accustomed to players spiking the ball after a touchdown, to linebackers doing little midfield dances after tackles they're particularly proud of. This immodesty was unimaginable in 1969. We're also used to athletes announcing their own greatness, and while by 1969 Muhammad Ali had pioneered this practice, it remained sufficiently shocking to attract plenty of attention for Namath. He thought a lot of himself and said so, often. Someone asked him during the 1968 season if he ever thought about someday succeeding Unitas as the game's best quarterback. "No," he replied, laughing, "because I feel that way now." Worse, he openly disparaged the other side, saying the AFL had at least four quarterbacks who were better than the Colts' scheduled starter, Earl Morrall. Told the Colts were taking these insults seriously, he said, "If what I say upsets them, they must not be pros." And then, in the most famous quote of his life, he told a roomful of journalists a few days before Super Bowl III, with a double scotch in his hand, "We're going to win this game. I guarantee it."

He guaranteed it! Oddly, in retrospect, this remark may have raised more cumulative blood pressure among those who felt the old order threatened than did any other development before the game. One, you simply did not say things like that—the old ideal forbade it—and two, didn't he know the Colts were 17-point favorites? Like the era's many other suddenly energized insurgents, Namath seemed to be denying all rationality, expressing placid confidence that the world really could be turned upside down.

But how could it? Jimmy the Greek had explained in detail exactly how he had determined that point spread: four points because the Colts' offensive line was better than the Jets', four points because the Colts' linebackers were better, four points because their cornerbacks were better, two points for better running backs, and three points for "the NFL mystique and Don Shula's coaching." It was as clear and irrefutable as our superiority in Vietnam. Further, such reasoning worked: the point spread had accurately predicted the outcomes of the first two Super Bowls. This was the largest spread yet.

By kickoff time, bettors had pushed it to 19½ points.

Skies were cloudy all day in Miami on January 12. These were the days when Super Bowls still began in mid-afternoon, Eastern time, forsaking extra TV viewers available in the evening; but on this occasion the sun wouldn't get in anybody's eyes. As planned, Namath started for the Jets, Earl Morrall for the Colts. Unitas had suffered tendonitis in his throwing arm for months, and Morrall, until that season a career second-string quarterback, had come into his own at age 34; sportswriters had voted him the NFL's most valuable player of the season. So while the game began as a clash of forces with plenty of symbolic power, the exquisitely pointed conflict of Namath vs. Unitas would have to wait.

The Jets won the toss and chose to receive. Lou Michaels of the Colts kicked off at 3:05 PM.

No one scored in the first quarter, which is not the way blowouts usually begin. A bit ominously, Morrall kept getting intercepted.

In the second quarter the Jets scored a touchdown when Namath handed off to fullback Matt Snell at the 4-yard line. The half ended: Jets 7, Colts 0.

The effect was disorienting. Still, things had plenty of time to return to their natural order. It was only halftime.

On the first play from scrimmage in the third quarter, Morrall fumbled at his own 33-yard line. The Jets recovered and after a few plays kicked a field goal. On the next series of downs, Morrall threw an incomplete pass, then threw a completion for no gain, then was sacked for a loss. The Colts punted. Namath then commanded a drive that included four complete passes and set up another Jets field goal. The Jets now led 13–0 with 3:58 left in the third quarter.

Suddenly, somehow, the situation had become desperate. The studied confidence of halftime had vaporized. No Colts fan could any longer find a comforting thought.

After the Jets' field goal, Curley Johnson's kickoff hit the goal posts, so the ball was brought out to the 20. Then the Colts' offensive unit took the field. But Morrall stayed on the bench. Out trundled Unitas.

This was, of course, electrifying: the aging, injured legend now the last hope to retrieve a near-hopeless situation. But on this day, in this game, in early 1969, it was much more. Now America's millions would see which culture, Old or New, was ascendant.

On his first play Unitas handed off to running back Tom Matte for a five-yard gain. Then he completed a pass for no gain, then threw another pass—incomplete. The Colts punted and the Jets took over.

The Jets pushed forward and early in the fourth quarter kicked another field goal. The score was now 16–0, almost reversing Jimmy the Greek's wide point spread.

This was becoming incredible.

On the Colts' next series of downs, their runners moved the ball to the Jets' 25—a prime scoring opportunity. Unitas threw—incomplete. Another pass—intercepted, heartbreakingly, in the end zone.

The Jets took over at their 20 but failed to score. On a fourth-down punt, the ball went back to the Colts, who took over on their own 20.

Then Unitas began to do what he was famous for, putting together a rapid 80-yard drive that ended in a touchdown at last, with running back Jerry Hill going in from the 1.

16–7.

With 3:19 remaining, the Colts tried an utterly predictable onside kick—and recovered. Hope dawned. Dear God, victory was actually possible—and far less improbable than anyone who didn't know Unitas would have assumed. This was just the sort of miraculous, waning-moments comeback Unitas had spent a career pulling off. He had done it four times the previous season. In one of those games, against the formidable Packers, the Colts had trailed 10–0 with 6:22 remaining. Unitas had led a touchdown drive, followed by a recovered onside kick, and, with just 1:19 left, had added another touchdown for the victory. Some football writers said these dramatic finishes defined Unitas as a player. He was renowned for his "two-minute drill," a series of plays he would run in rapid succession, without huddles. When fans saw Unitas start the drill in a game's final minutes, they knew what was coming, and the excitement became almost unbearable.

They saw him starting it now. Everyone remembered why he was an immortal. For a flickering instant, the old order opened its eyes and resumed breathing.

Now Unitas needed another touchdown, fast.

Two completions moved the ball 20 yards for a first down.

It was happening.

On the ensuing series Unitas's first pass was complete for a five-yard gain.

Here we go.

His second pass was tipped away by a Jet defender. His third pass was too short. Two and a half minutes remained.

Unitas's fourth-down pass, if complete, would keep hope alive. If incomplete, then all was lost.

Unitas fired at Jimmy Orr, an end. Jet linebacker Larry Grantham batted the ball away.

Orr never touched it.

At 5:49 PM the game ended. Namath loped off the field, head bowed, his index finger in the air wagging "Number 1." It's a piece of film every football fan has seen and will never forget.

The reasons for the upset are not especially dramatic. The Jets defense, which so effectively shut down the Colts offense, gets most of the credit. Namath actually played a fairly conservative game, passing less than usual. The failure of virtually anybody to predict the outcome, while remarkable, is easier to understand when one considers that the AFL and NFL played no interleague games during the season.

But what did any of that matter? The Jets popped champagne corks in their locker room, the Colts sat morose and silent in theirs.

The question had been decided.

If the millions of Americans who rose blinking from their seats sensed they had seen the beginnings of a new world, later events would confirm the feeling—though few could have seen what was coming. The triumph of the New Culture, the ascendance of self-gratification, the demise of the old sports ethic that Bubba Smith so eloquently expressed—all were part of the cultural unraveling that has shaped the past three decades and that continues to be reflected in sports. With the ideal of an athlete no longer defined by an elevated character, or by much of anything other than the size of one's contract, sports began to lose the place of authority they had held in the culture. Slowly but ineluctably they have come to be regarded as another form of programming. Their richer meaning has mostly been drained away. Nothing expressed the trend better than last year's baseball strike, which most Americans regarded as two groups of whining millionaires having a spat, without the dimmest consciousness that anything larger might be at stake. When the game returned, late, for the 1995 season, fans shrugged. What was there here to stir the soul?

This emptiness, so characteristic of this age, is many years and many steps distant from January 12, 1969. But the road between the two is a straight one. Even at the time, Super Bowl III had the feel of a defining moment in the culture. In retrospect, its status is not in doubt. ●

Urbanities

The Millionaire Capital of America

Maury Klein

No one knows exactly when money first began to talk in New York, but it has not shut up since. What is known is that, by the late nineteenth century, the city had emerged as the millionaire capital of the world, with no other city even a close second in sheer concentration of money. And when so many millionaires, instead of each inhabiting his or her hilltop mansion far removed from all the others, found themselves packed in a seething tangle into so modest an area, the result was an extraordinary culture. Eminence competed with eminence for preeminence—and the traditional two-step of the American Dream, the accumulation of wealth and then the parlaying of it into social status, took on some extravagant twists.

Mrs. Vanderbilt (above) invited to her ball Lady Mandeville (right), . . .

Even before baseball statistics became a national obsession, the number and size of fortunes drew rapt attention. The box scores began surprisingly early. Though Benjamin Disraeli's 1826 novel *Vivian Gre* gave the world the term "millionaire," it had little relevance in America until the 1840s. A 1798 tax survey of 1.7 million adult males in the young republic revealed only 130 men with valuations exceeding $50,000 (a huge fortune in that era), with the largest at about $300,000.

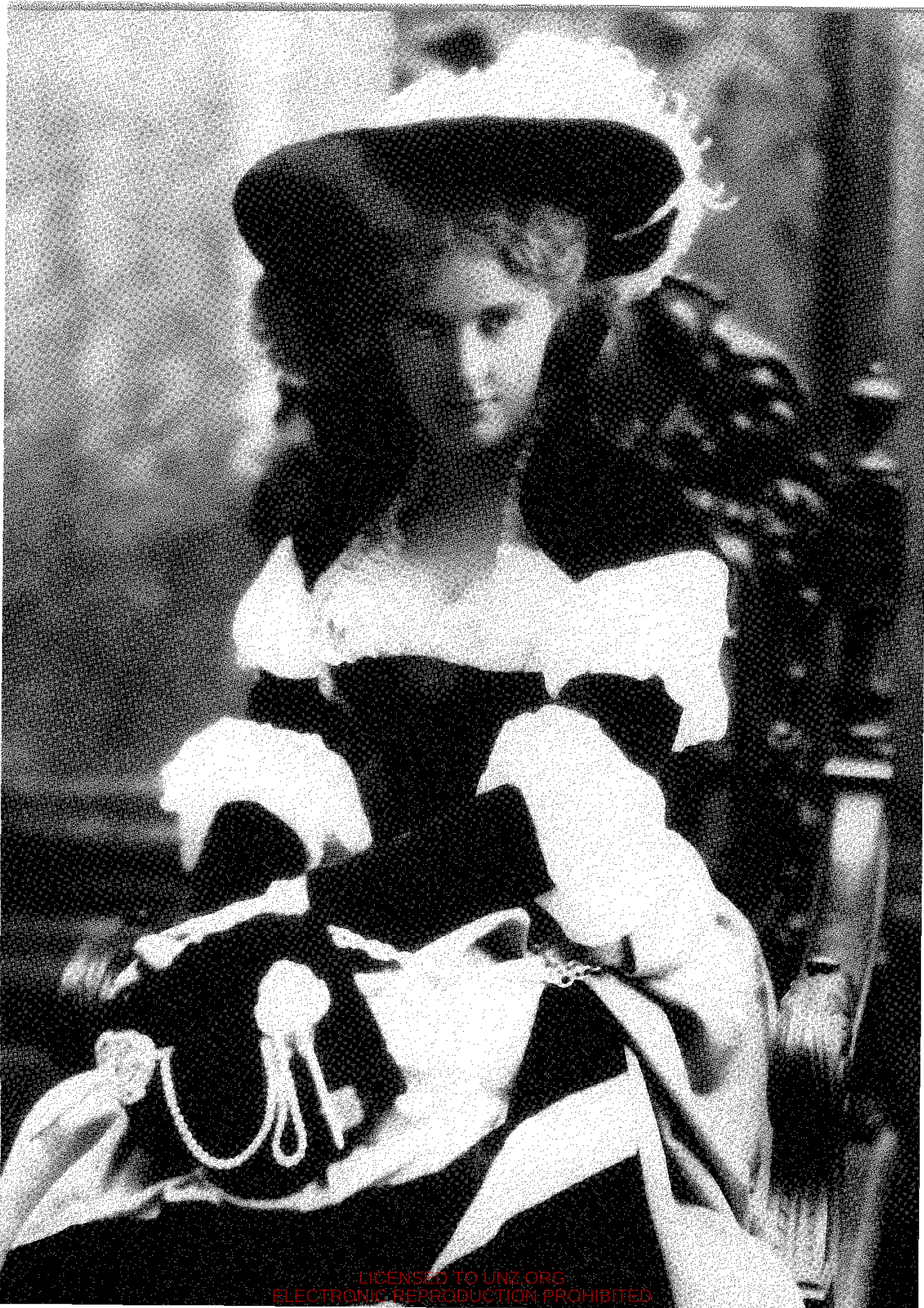
How rapidly things changed can be seen in the efforts of Moses Y. Beach, owner of the New York *Sun*, to compile a list of the city's richest men in 1845. Beach found 25 millionaires in New York alone. John Jacob Astor topped the list with $25 million, a sum equal to nearly 7 percent of the nation's total investment in manufacturing. Astor had built his fortune on furs before switching to the more prosaic but immensely profitable field of real estate. Steven van Rensselaer stood second at $10 million, all in land. As Beach said of the van Rensselaers, "One son owns Albany County, and the other Van Rensselaer County." Other familiar names on the list included the land-rich Goelet family, industrialist Peter Cooper, dry-goods magnate A. T. Stewart, shipping titan Cornelius Vanderbilt, and banker Moses Taylor.

At mid-century these fortunes seemed immense, yet within the span of a single lifetime the industrial experience dwarfed them in both size and number. In 1890 the New York *Tribune* undertook to compile a list of all the millionaires in the United States. The paper did its work with care, using information drawn from 1,500 "merchants, bankers, commercial agencies, lawyers, surrogates of counties, trustees, and other citizens" over a period of 18 months. The final product, published in 1892, listed an astonishing 4,047 members of this once exclusive club. Economic expansion and not inflation generated these fortunes; the years from 1865 to 1897 marked the longest unbroken period of *deflation* in American history.

To understand what a million dollars was in 1892, consider that a factory worker earned about $446 a year, a railroader $563, and a miner $393. Clerks took home about $885 annually, schoolteachers a paltry $270. A family could live in middle-class comfort with servants on $2,000 a year. With interest rates at 4 percent, people of means could earn this amount on a nest egg of $50,000. In 1892 the purchasing power of a dollar was perhaps 13 or 14 times what it is now, and no one paid any federal income tax regardless of how much he earned.

Although the wealth was spread across the entire American landscape (only five states had no millionaires at

Photographs: UPI/Bettmann



all), most of its owners lived in the Northeast and in cities. Two-thirds of all millionaires resided in only five states, 53 percent of them in New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts alone. Some 48 percent lived in five cities—with 27 percent in New York. No other American city approached this density of dollars; second-place Chicago contained only 7 percent of the millionaires. Ambrose Bierce immortalized the city's plutocratic preeminence in 1906 in *The Devil's Dictionary*, where he defined Mammon as "the god of the world's leading religion. His chief temple is in the holy city of New York."

Was the Millionaire Capital in 1892 a place where money was made or a place where money went to live after it was made? The answer is both. Of the 1,103 fortunes listed by the *Tribune* for New York City, nearly 40 percent were at least partly inherited; another 19 percent were in estates and about to become inheritances. One computation put the percent of new millionaires on the list at 69 percent for New York compared with an average of 82 percent for the rest of the nation and a whopping 98 percent for Chicago, still too new to have old money.

Some of the city's greatest old family fortunes on the *Tribune* list were rooted in real estate, including the Astors, Beekmans, Cuttings, DePeysters, Fishes, Gerrys, Goelets, Hamiltons, Livingstons, Morrises, Roosevelts, Rhinelanders, Schermerhorns, and Stuyvesants. (These old fortunes tended to disperse among a multitude of heirs; the *Tribune* list included whole battalions of millionaires with these family names.) Hopper S. Mott had the good luck to inherit the family farm, which in his case extended from near Fifth Avenue to the Hudson River and across the river to the Jersey shore. The old Stryker farm gave its happy heir a large chunk of land near 50th Street. The father and uncle of John E. Simpson had transformed a pawnbroking business into a half-century of land accumulation in the Bowery and Westchester County.

Mrs. H. McK. Twombly, . . .

A surprising 17 percent of New York's millionaires were women, but virtually all of them were the widows or daughters of wealthy men. Even Hetty Green, the notorious "Witch of Wall Street", who amassed a fortune at what was deemed men's work—playing hardball in the financial markets—started her career with an inheritance.

The newer fortunes on the list were more various. Some of the city's best-known millionaires were still at the height of their careers. Benjamin Altman and Isidor Straus had become giants in retail dry goods, George F. Baker and J. P. Morgan in banking, Charles A. Dana and Joseph Pulitzer in publishing, Thomas A. Edison in electric invention, the Rockefeller brothers and their partners in oil, Jay Gould in railroads and western development, Augustus D. Juilliard in wholesale dry goods and woolen manufacturing, Jacob Ruppert in brewing, William Steinway in the manufacture of pianos, and Charles L. Tiffany in jewelry and silverware.

Other new fortunes sprang from more unexpected sources. James P. Allaire owned the nation's largest marine engine works. Jordan L. Mott made the first stove that could burn anthracite coal. L. Mortimer Thorn grew rich by discovering a fast dye for calico, while Semon Bache made his money importing plate and window glass, and Birdseye Blakeman by publishing schoolbooks. Milo M. Belding manufactured sewing silks, Clarence Brooks varnish, E. Frank Coe fertilizer, Maximilian Fleischmann yeast, and Robert A. Cheesebrough Vaseline. William H. Gebhard

Mrs. Henry Clews, . . .

imported wines and liquors for a growing clientele that could afford the best. Dr. Frederick Humphreys grew rich on homeopathic family medicines. Stephen R. Lesher parlayed something as humble as imported tailors' trimmings into a fortune. Leonard Lewisohn began his successful business career by importing hair, bristles, and ostrich and other feathers before becoming a sales agent for several copper companies.

Living in close proximity to each other, amidst a seemingly endless panorama of identical plutocrats, these millionaires struggled to distinguish themselves above their fellow tycoons, with the same energy—though with less ingenuity and variousness—that they had brought to the making of money. At bottom, the strategies they adopted boil down to only four. The most obvious was exuberant, flamboyant, flaunting display. Men who competed fiercely in business—and some who no longer had to—vied to own the grandest, most opulent mansions, the biggest yachts, the finest horses, and the most stunning art collection, while their wives contrived to give the most memorable parties.

and Caroline Astor.

Mansions were the most conspicuous form of display. The block-long, triple-brownstone mansion of William H. Vanderbilt at 51st Street and Fifth Avenue, built in 1883 in the Italian Renaissance style, cost an estimated $3 million. In Mrs. Vanderbilt's exquisite bedroom, where "silver toilet services, embroidered silks, and delicate hangings vie with masterly paintings to refresh the attention," one awed visitor was charmed to find "one worn-looking object, and only one; it is the little Bible." At least Mrs. Vanderbilt was able to sleep among the magnificence of her surroundings; Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish commissioned for herself a Gothic bedroom that so enraptured her that she chose to leave it unsullied by sleeping in an adjacent dressing room. As it turned out, most of these elaborate homes, built to endure the ages, did not survive a century.

Entertaining took place on the same opulently showy scale. Alva Vanderbilt's 1883 costume ball was rumored to have cost $250,000 for costumes, catering, food, champagne, and decor, which included transforming the second-floor supper room into a tropical forest luxuriating with potted palms and orchids. One wealthy animal lover gave a banquet for his favorite dog, culminating in the gift of a $15,000 diamond collar to the canine guest of honor. In 1905 James Hazen Hyde, heir to the Equitable Life Assurance fortune, hired famed architect Stanford White to create a court ball in the style of Louis XVI. The state suite of Sherry's restaurant became a replica of the salons of the Grand Trianon Palace, graced by guests in elaborate period costumes. Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, bored with the usual social affairs, hosted a formal dinner party for a mysterious "prince," who turned out to be a pet monkey in white tie and tails.

At bottom, all this display really aimed at a more permanent distinction. New York's tycoons sought to be recognized by high society. A pattern developed: energetic men furnished the sinews of the war for social acceptance in the form of a fortune, and their equally energetic and ambitious wives fought the battles that gained their family entry into society. The excesses these battles spawned led Henry Adams to observe that American society was the first to move from barbarism to decadence without passing through the middle stage of civilization.

The translation of wealth into social status over the course of a generation or two was the

"The" Mrs. Astor

way American democracy had always conferred status. So it's not surprising that New York, the center of American economic life, also became the capital of high society. In a democratic, highly mobile society where class was not rigidly defined, money bought social status along with the other comforts of life. While Americans spurned any notion of formal aristocracy, they embraced a privileged class based on wealth because it suggested that the social system was still fluid and open to all comers. Although later studies confirm that most of those at the top started near the top, enough poor-boys-made-good—like Andrew Carnegie, Jay Gould, and John D. Rockefeller—turned up on the *Tribune* list to preserve the cherished belief that anybody could make it with enough grit and hard work.

The least subtle way of gaining entry to society was to force your way in by a show of financial force too overwhelming to oppose. The ingenious and fiercely determined Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt used this tactic brilliantly to breach the citadel of high society ruled by the redoubtable Caroline Astor. From the ultimate dominance of society by these two strong-willed women emerged the emblem of all ambitious hostesses of the Gilded Age, a fictitious snob dubbed "Mrs. Astorbilt" by one disenchanted critic.

The "Witch of Wall Street," Henrietta Green, and daughter

Caroline Astor had established herself as the reigning queen of high society, while the Vanderbilts were still mere pretenders whose money was so new, it was said, you could hear it crackle as they walked by. To gain social recognition, Alva Vanderbilt (the former Alva Smith of Mobile, Alabama) decided in 1883 to test Caroline Astor's supremacy by giving the most elaborate costume ball ever to dazzle New York.

News of the event flooded the papers, and anxiety over who might be invited, according to the *Times*, "disturbed the sleep and occupied the waking hours of social butterflies . . . for over six weeks." Hearing that Caroline Astor's daughter planned to attend, Alva Vanderbilt sent word via a mutual acquaintance that, regrettably, an invitation to young Caroline was quite impossible because her mother had never called on the Vanderbilts. Stifling her anger, the haughty Caroline Astor bowed to expediency. In grand style she rode her carriage to the Vanderbilt mansion on Fifth Avenue and allowed her footman dressed in blue livery to hand a Vanderbilt footman in maroon livery her card. That moment of surrender marked the formal arrival of the Vanderbilts in high society. Those who relished this encounter missed its most revealing aspect: namely, how new the Astors themselves were to the ranks of old money and how quickly the Vanderbilts would join them there.

Sometimes the assault was a group effort, and in at least one case it produced a civic treasure as a by-product. In 1883, the same year as Mrs. Vanderbilt's ball, the Metropolitan Opera was founded by a formidable combination of new money led by the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Goulds, and others who could not secure boxes at the prestigious Academy of Music. The opera battle capsuled the larger issue of translating wealth into social status. The Academy had only 18 boxes, all of them clutched by old-money families, including the Livingstons, Schuylers, and Beekmans. The newcomers offered as much as $30,000 for boxes in the dress circle but could not pry any of them from the old guard, who scorned the siege of what they considered nouveaux vulgarians.

Banker August Belmont tactfully suggested adding 26 new boxes to the Academy, but the Vanderbilt camp insisted on original boxes. The argument was about not music but status. Few of the combatants actually enjoyed opera; some, like Jay Gould, could not distinguish *Aida* from the national anthem. Undaunted, they subscribed enough money to build a new opera house with two rows of boxes known as the Diamond Horseshoe, that seated new-money denizens worth altogether about $540 million. Their presence, sniffed one reporter, "perfumed the air with the odor of crisp greenbacks. Their tiers of boxes looked like cages in a menagerie of monopolists." Within a decade the Metropolitan had supplanted the Academy.

Other tycoons joined the ranks of the elite by making love, not war. "Men of no social distinction," recalled Mrs. John King van Rensselaer, a *grande dame* of New York high society, "have frequently become prominent in society by marrying women of breeding. The Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Belmonts, and other present leaders have attained their station through the infusion of aristocratic blood into their line through marriages with the old families. Their wives made them." But the reality was that the gentility depended on money for its existence, and the need to underwrite its privileged style of life sometimes required drawing newcomers into the charmed circle.

John Jacob Astor helped blaze this trail to social success that so many others would follow. The immigrant son of a German butcher, Astor used his fortune to marry his son William to an Armstrong, whose bloodlines embraced many of New York's oldest families. Where his father was rude and unpleasant, William was merely dull. But he learned the alphabet of manners from his wife and let her grace and reputation carry him upward in society. Their son William also married the daughter of a proud old New York family, Caroline Schermerhorn, who used the Astor fortune to make herself the undisputed queen of high society, known simply as "*the* Mrs. Astor." In three generations the Astors had advanced from crude, ill-mannered possessors of wealth to the pinnacle of New York society, from which they could sneer haughtily at those striving to do what they themselves had done.

The widows and daughters of men who'd made it into the social elite often took this process one step further: they traded American money for European titles through the marriage mart. The Countess Di Agreda gained her fortune from her first husband, tobacco scion George L. Lorillard. The Duchess De Camposelice owed hers to the sewing machine riches of first husband Isaac M. Singer, whose daughters acquired the titles of Duchess Decazes and Princess Scey-Montbeliard. Railroad baron Collis P. Huntington's daughter metamorphosed into Princess Hatzfeld, while Medora Marie Hoffman, daughter of a rich banker, became the Marchioness de Mores. And just plain Florence Garner was transformed into the elegantly titled Lady Gordon-Cumming.

Some more patient possessors of new money insinuated themselves gradually into society by doing all the right things and playing by its rules until opportunity beckoned. They wholeheartedly embraced the old-money style of life and the subtle social conventions that separated the elect from the merely rich. They bought houses in what the *Times* called the "magic parallelogram" between Third and Sixth avenues and 14th and 59th streets, where by the 1870s nearly everyone of any social standing lived. They tried to send their children to the right schools, join the right church, vacation in the right places, even get into the right club. They worked hard to know the right people, often securing a connection by making friends with the somewhat threadbare members of old money through whom introductions could be garnered to their upper-crust relatives.

Keeping track of the right people was not always easy. Hostesses maintained their own lists of possible dinner guests for any occasion. Grace Vanderbilt had 150 names on one such list and a reserve of another 75. The *Social Register* came into being in 1887 to ease the task and dubbed fewer than 2,000 New Yorkers with its stamp of approval. Club rosters, subscription lists to charities, dancing groups, and the visiting lists kept by leading ladies also furnished names of the right people.

To outside eyes that saw only the facades of mansions and caught glimpses of the rich emerging from their carriages or read about them in the papers, the life of the right people and their groupies seemed elegant and thrilling. In fact, social rituals drained it of thrills or surprises. Dinner parties often ran to seven courses with a Roman punch in the middle as a bracer, but conversation rarely rose above conventional prattle. Propriety consisted of the bland leading the bland. It was deemed impolite to discuss politics, religion, gossip, sex, servants, money, or anything controversial. "The Four Hundred," writer Lloyd Morris noted dryly, "would have fled in a body from a poet, a painter, a musician, or a clever Frenchman."

The evolution of new money into old money, in short, wasn't always a happy transformation. Too often the founding father of a fortune left heirs who were never able to escape his giant shadow. Few could come even close to matching the achievements of their father. They might preserve or manage the business empire he had created, but more often they failed even at that and gradually sank into the arid, self-indulgent life of leisure that had always been the privilege of the privileged class. As Howard Mumford Jones put it, the "old aristocracies" of New York and other cities "steadily declined into islands of genteel obsolescence."

While old money lost its taste and energy for business, it became the driving force behind philanthropy and civic enterprise in New York. Old-money representatives graced the boards of every major cultural institution in service to a notion of stewardship that replaced their vanished economic dominance. Some believed the wealthy had a social responsibility to use their fortunes wisely; others simply wished to provide the city with the trappings of "culture" in the form of libraries, schools, universities, museums, art galleries, orchestras, operas, and theaters. Andrew Carnegie, whose money was still crinkly new, elevated this impulse into a full-blown doctrine called the Gospel of Wealth. He also practiced what he preached: after selling his giant steel enterprise to J. P. Morgan's new United States Steel, Carnegie made a second career out of giving away $350 million of a fortune estimated at $380 million.

But these socially useful by-products could not conceal the fact that over the span of a generation or two innovation had given way to enervation. New money possessed the energy to get things done but lacked old elite's cohesion and tradition of civic service. Old money possessed the tradition (as well as long memories) but lacked the drive or the influence to exert authority over anything beyond the walls of society. The old elite had lost its power over the city, and the ranks of new money were too diffuse to give them comparable sway. In New York as elsewhere, the elite surrendered their political domination of the city to political machines built on the rising tide of immigration. Only a rare few members of old money—most conspicuously Theodore Roosevelt—ventured into the seamy world of politics.

Moreover, the same proliferation of fortunes that expanded the circle of millionaires also weakened the influence of individual men of wealth. In industrial America business titans had the money to buy political favors but not the power to rule. Nor did they want to rule. Contrary to many of its critics, Standard Oil did not want to run America—who needed all those problems? It wanted only to serve its own needs. To businessmen and corporations, political power was important only to get or prevent legislation vital to their interests.

Nonetheless, New York continued over the course of the century as the wealth capital of the nation: by the early 1990s, New York's half-dozen billionaires represented the country's largest concentration of that still-rare species, and 66 of the 400 richest Americans, or 16.5 percent, called New York home. The same rituals that converted money into status in 1890 operated almost unchanged, from hosting opulent parties to engraving the names of the new tycoons over the portals of museums and hospital buildings, built with the newest of new money.

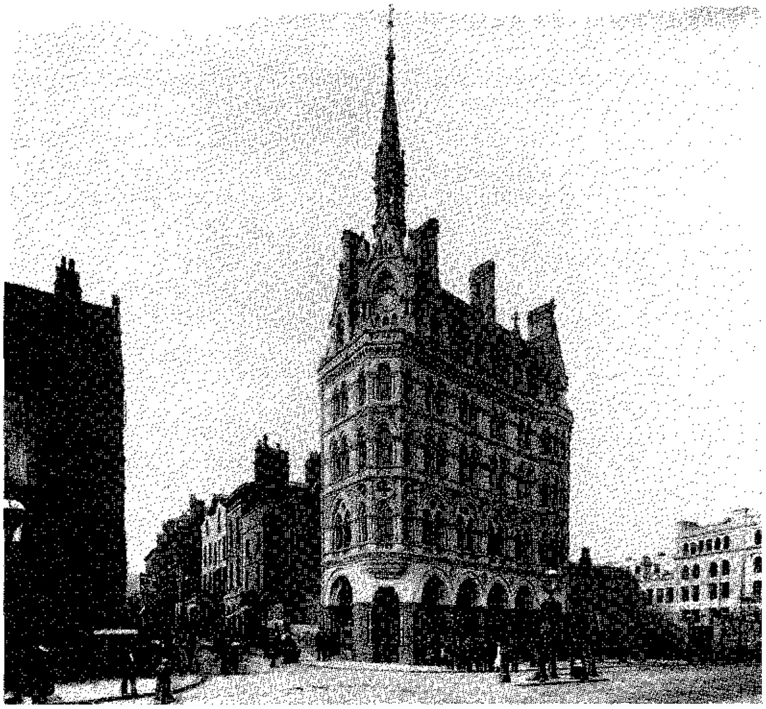
Had anything changed? Only that New York's 16.5 percent share of the nation's richest people had fallen from the 22.3 percent of a mere decade earlier, a proportion within hailing distance of 1890's 27 percent. That is a most dramatic change, brought about by many forces, from technological change to political folly. And it is a change in something that for over a century has made New York unique. •

Oh, to be in England

Do Sties Make Pigs?

Theodore Dalrymple

Until quite recently, I had assumed that the extreme ugliness of the city in which I live was attributable to the Luftwaffe. I imagined that the cheap and charmless high-rise buildings which so disfigure the city-scape had been erected of necessity in great gaping holes left by Heinkel bombers. I had spent much of my childhood playing in deserted bomb shelters in public parks: and although I was born some years after the end of the war, that great conflagration still exerted a powerful hold on the imagination of British children of my generation.



A relic of the past: Victorian confidence and civic pride.

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I discovered how wrong I was not long ago when I entered a store whose walls were decorated with large photographs of the city as it had been before the war. It was then a fine place, in a grandiloquent, Victorian kind of way. Every building had spoken of a bulging, no doubt slightly pompous and ridiculous, municipal pride. Industry and Labor were glorified in statuary, and a leavening of Greek temples and Italian Renaissance palaces lightened the prevailing mock-Venetian Gothic architecture.

"A great shame about the war," I said to the store assistant, who was of an age to remember the old days. "Look at the city now."

"The war?" she said. "The war had nothing to do with it. It was the council."

The City Council—the people's elected representatives—it transpired, had done far more damage to the fabric of the city in the 1950s and 1960s than had Goering's air force. Indeed, they had managed to turn it into a terrible visual ordeal for anyone with the most minimal visual sensibility.

First among the reasons for this large-scale architectural vandalism was the prolonged revulsion against all things Victorian. In Britain this was particularly pronounced after the war because for the first time it was unmistakably clear just how far the country had declined from its Victorian apogee of world power and influence: a decline made somewhat easier to bear, psychologically speaking, by the consistent, unabashed denigration not only of the Victorians themselves but of all their ideas and works as well.

I witnessed a striking example of this revulsion in my own household. My father, a communist and therefore predisposed to view the past in a lurid light, especially by comparison with the inevitable post-revolutionary glories to come, had bought several Victorian paintings at Sotheby's during the war for ten shillings each. (Communists are not necessarily opposed to taking advantage of a temporary depression in prices.) He kept them in the loft of the house. Then, one day in 1960, quite arbitrarily, he decided that they were taking up too much space—unlike the tins of fruit he had stockpiled during the Korean War in the expectation that it would escalate into the Third World War, and which were now beginning to explode, but which he kept forever. He took all the paintings except one and put them on a bonfire, an act which I knew even at the age of ten to be one of terrible barbarism. I begged him not to do it—to give the paintings away if he didn't like them—but no, they had to be destroyed.

Then there was the modernist arrogance about not only the Victorian past but all the centuries that had gone before—my city swept away many eighteenth-century buildings along with Victorian and Edwardian ones. British architects finally caught up with the Italian futurist, Marinetti, who condemned the past without exception, who demanded a clean break with all that had gone before, who ridiculed all previous styles, and who worshiped only those attributes of modernity: speed and size. Among other schemes, he wanted to fill in the canals of Venice and replace the palazzi with modern factories.

But just as the Italy of his day was technologically backward, so the Britain of the modernizing architects was no longer in the vanguard, the palm for modernity having long since passed to America. The architects thought that modernity was a value that transcended all other virtues; they thought they could wake the country from its nostalgic slumber, dragging it into the twentieth century by pouring what seemed to them the most modern of building materials—reinforced concrete—all over it. Hence, among many other crimes, they tore down the elegant Victorian wrought iron tracery of my city's main railway station, with its splendid arched roof over platforms and tracks, and built instead a brutalist construction of steel and soon-discolored concrete to a plan that proved no more practical or functional than the old.

My city was far from alone in having suffered the Bakuninite demolishing fervor of the modernizers (as Bakunin said, the urge to destroy is also a creative urge). Even small country towns have not escaped their notice: Huntingdon, Oliver Cromwell's birthplace, was provided with a ring road of such hideous and dysfunctional design, simultaneously rendering exit from and entry into the town difficult and dangerous, that architects and town planners around the world now study it as a warning. Shrewsbury, Darwin's birthplace and a town that for several centuries managed to combine the most diverse architectural styles, so that its townscape as a whole was greater than the sum of its parts, has been ruined as an aesthetic experience by a few visually inescapable modern office blocks and multi-story car parks. It would be too depressing to list the English towns and cities marred by this treatment.

But it is public housing that exemplifies most clearly the ideas of those who transformed the British urban landscape during the 1950s and 1960s. Here the new aesthetics combined with socialist reforming zeal to produce a multilayered disaster.

After the war, *bien pensants* universally agreed that pre-war British society had been grossly unjust. The working class, it was said, had been shamelessly exploited, as was manifest principally in Britain's great inequalities of income and its overcrowded housing. A sharply progressive income tax (which at one point reached 95 percent) would redress the inequalities of income, while slum clearance and the construction of large-scale housing projects would alleviate the housing problem.

The middle-class reformers thought of poverty wholly in physical terms: an insufficiency of food and warmth, a lack of space. How, they asked, could people come to the finer things in life if their basic requirements were so inadequately met? What could freedom mean (I remember my father asking) in the absence of decent housing conditions? Since social prob-

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lems such as crime and delinquency (which we were soon to discover were in their infancy) were attributable to physical deprivation—to the environment rather than the criminal or delinquent—the construction of decent housing would solve all problems at once.

But what was decent housing? A civil servant, Parker Morris, provided the answer: a certain number of cubic yards of living space per inhabitant. The Ministry of Housing adopted the Parker Morris standards for all public housing; they governed the size and number of rooms—*and that was all.*

In the circumstances, who can be surprised that the architectural style, if style it can be called, of Le Corbusier came to dominate the construction of public housing, even though it had already proved disastrous in the one place, Marseilles, where Corbusier had been given full rein? It was the simplest and cheapest means of complying with the now-sacrosanct Parker Morris standards. Besides, Le Corbusier was a kindred spirit to bureaucrats and town planners—not just an architect but a visionary and would-be social reformer. Of Paris he wrote: "Imagine all this junk, which until now has lain spread out over the soil like a dry crust, cleaned off and carted away, and replaced by immense clear crystals of glass, rising to a height of over 600 feet!" In this spirit, much of my city, especially the terraced housing of the working class, was cleaned off and carted away, to be replaced by Le Corbusier's "vertical city . . . bathed in light and air." Some light, some air!

It occurred to no authority that perhaps more was being swept away than a mere dry crust. If the reformers had been right, the people who lived in such poor housing should remember the conditions with bitterness: but they don't. Even allowing for the roseate glow that the passage of time lends to experience, what my patients tell me of the streets where they grew up does not vindicate the reformers.

True, the houses in which my patients lived often lacked the basic amenities now taken for granted: proper indoor plumbing, for example. They were cramped. And much of the terraced housing—known as two-up-two-down—was aesthetically undistinguished. But with imaginative adaptation and improvement (now belatedly under way in what remains of such housing), more than adequate, even pleasing accommodation could have been produced without the wholesale destruction of communities that resulted from the indiscriminate demolitions of the fifties and sixties.

For as my patients tell me, a sense of community did exist in these streets of little red houses, to such an extent that people who came from more than a few streets away were regarded as strangers, almost as foreigners. No doubt the community feeling resulted in a certain small-mindedness, but it also meant that life was not then the war of permanently inflamed egos to be found in Corbusian housing projects—egos inflamed by the fact that the inhabitants have been, and continue to be, treated so transparently by social policy makers as faceless, interchangeable, passive ciphers that the only way to assert their individuality is to behave antisocially. I fight, therefore I am.

This sense of community, now destroyed, allowed people to withstand genuine hardship—hardship that wasn't self-inflicted, like so much of today's. I remember a patient who described with great warmth the street in which he had lived as a child—"until," he added, "Adolf Hitler moved us on." What an admirable depth of character, uncomplaining in the face of misfortune, those few words convey! Nowadays the victim of such a bombing would be more likely to blame the government for having declared war on the Nazis in the first place.

The housing projects were built at what (for Britain) was record speed, and whoever wants to see for himself the reductio ad absurdum of the materialist and rationalist conception of human life cannot do better than to visit one of these projects. The idea that happiness and well-being consist of the satisfaction of a few simple physical needs, and can therefore be planned on behalf of society by benevolent administrators, is here bleakly mocked.

As the architects failed to foresee, the spaces between the vast, geometric shapes of the Corbusian apartment blocks act as wind tunnels, turning the slightest breeze into a hurricane. I know an old lady who has been blown over so many times that she no longer dares to do her own shopping. Nature itself is turned into one more source of hostility. Walkways are isolated and ill-lit, so that rapists may safely abduct: two of my patients were raped en route to my clinic in a walkway not a hundred yards away. Notices planted in the grass around the apartment blocks of one housing project added to the Orwellian spirit of the place before they were ripped out by residents: DO NOT WALK ON THE GRASS. IT IS AN AMENITY TO BE ENJOYED BY EVERYONE.

As for the buildings themselves, they are, with a vengeance, Le Corbusier's "machines for living in"—though perhaps "existing in" would be more accurate. The straight line and the right angle reign supreme: no curves, no frivolous decorative touches, no softening materials add warmth to the steel, glass, and concrete. There is nothing that Mies van der Rohe, another dictator in architect's clothing, would have condemned as "aesthetic speculation."

What do the tenants think of their apartment blocks? They

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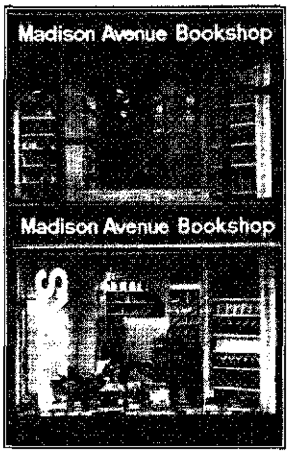

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vote with their urine. The public spaces and elevators of all public housing blocks I know are so deeply impregnated with urine that the odor is ineradicable. And anything smashable has been smashed.

The people who inhabit these apartments are utterly isolated. All that connects them is the noise they make, often considerable, which permeates the flimsy walls, ceilings, and floors. They are likely to be unemployed and poorly educated, socialized neither by work nor by pastimes. Single mothers are housed here, guaranteeing the impoverishment of their children's social environment: and in Britain we are now into the second generation of children who know no other environment.

No civic or collective life is possible in such conditions, and so there are no standards of conduct: every man's whim is law, and the most physically powerful and ruthless is the one who sets the tone and makes the rules. When a patient of mine was suspended by her ankles from the window of her 11th-floor apartment by her jealous boyfriend, no one noticed or considered it his duty to intervene. She herself was unaware that there was anything morally reprehensible (as against merely unpleasant) about her boyfriend's conduct.

It is true that when another patient of mine mountaineered down his apartment block from his 14th-floor apartment, the police asked me to visit to determine whether there was a medical explanation of his behavior. But what I found persuaded me that no desert hermit was ever more alone than the inhabitant of an English housing project.

My patient had spent the last few years of his life sniffing glue in his apartment. The water and electricity had been cut off for non-payment. He lived in permanent darkness, his filthy curtains always drawn. His apartment no longer contained a stick of furniture, but in the middle of his living room—Parker Morris standard—was an old oil drum that he had used as a brazier to burn his furniture to keep warm. The embers of the last of his bed glowed faintly.

Why, I asked, had he taken to the rope and climbed down the outer wall of his building?

Because, he replied, he feared that his brazier might set fire to his apartment, and he wanted to test his escape route.

And the other tenants of the block? I inquired.

A slightly puzzled look flitted across his face. What did I mean?

A dim apprehension that perhaps the Parker Morris standards were not sufficient for gracious urban living eventually filtered into the minds of British officialdom. Their response? Community centers.

These too were built of concrete. Their large gray cheerless rooms were radically unheatable, unpleasantly cool even in summer. Their basements, which could have served as torture chambers, housed Ping-Pong tables. Anything stealable was stolen, whether it was of use to the thief or not: more for the practice, really. What, after all, does one do with a table tennis net in the absence of a table tennis table? It soon became clear that the formula Parker Morris plus Ping-Pong did not work either. The community centers became places where unemployed young men and chronic schizophrenics went to exchange social security for marijuana.

When I aired my thoughts about public housing to a British architect—to whom, in my heart, I ascribed some of the collective blame for the calamitous situation—he at once shot back, "Yes, but do sties make pigs, or do pigs make sties?"

A profound question, perhaps the profoundest that can be asked. After all, you can lead a mugger to a victim, but you can't make him rob.

In the midst of one particularly grim housing project to which I once was called—a single mother was threatening to immolate her infant—stood an apartment block conspicuously less disgusting than the rest. It was inhabited entirely by old-age pensioners: either they no longer had the energy for vandalism, or they had not the inclination for it. If the Parker Morris standards were not a sufficient condition of decent living, neither were they a sufficient condition of its opposite.

What really made the difference, I concluded, was the policy by which public housing, of which there was a limited supply despite the building boom of three decades, was allocated. In conditions of shortage, justice demanded that such housing as existed should be allocated according to need: and what greater proof of need could there be than social pathology?

An unemployed single woman with three children by three fathers, none of whom supported his offspring in any way, could be said to be in greater need than a fully employed married couple with one child, who might reasonably be expected to look after themselves. *Mirabile dictu*, there was soon more than enough social pathology to fill the space available for it. Indeed, a kind of arms race in social pathology developed: my violence towards others outguns your attempts to kill yourself.

The results of this policy have been truly bizarre. Because public housing is subsidized, many desire it. Traditionally, city councils as landlords have been reluctant to evict their tenants, no matter what their behavior is or if they fail to pay their rent, in part to draw attention to the ideological difference between the public and

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GUSTON'S
POEM-
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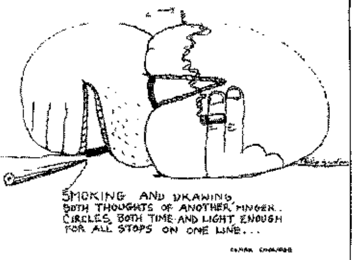
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the private sectors, to the gain of the former. Unlike the hard-hearted, exploitative private landlord struggling for private advantage, the city council landlord benevolently provides a social service. Thus a public housing tenancy is to psychopaths what tenure is to academics: no better invitation to irresponsibility could possibly be imagined.

Oddly enough, this encouragement of what was hitherto considered antisocial behavior was given in the name of a supposedly tolerant refusal to make moral judgments. But since those who put themselves in a position of need by their own behavior were favored over those who failed to do so, an implicit judgment was in fact made: a judgment whose perversity is evident from the requests I receive from my patients for letters to the housing authorities to strengthen their case for receiving the tenancy of an apartment.

In these missives, my patients tell me, I should emphasize their alcoholism or drug addiction, their bad temper and tendency to assault those around them—the consequence, plainly, of a lack of proper accommodation. I should mention their repeated overdoses, the fact that they resort to tranquilizers obtained illegally, that they have had several abortions and are now pregnant for the fifth time, that they have had three violent and drunken boyfriends in succession, that they gamble their money uncontrollably (or uncontrolledly). In not a single case has anyone ever asked me to write that he is a decent, hard-working, honorable citizen, who would make a good tenant. That would send him straight to the bottom of the waiting list.

Indeed, the perverse criteria by which public housing has been allocated during the past two or three decades has reinforced the inexorable rise in the proportion of the young adult population living alone, a tendency which many powerful currents in our culture have encouraged. In the Thatcher years, the number of non-elderly adults living alone or as single parents doubled in absolute terms and almost as a proportion of total households as well. Hardly a day passes when I do not meet an 18- or 19-year-old, without a job, without financial resources, without skills or training, without family support, without mental accomplishments, who has been given an apartment at public expense. Housing is a right, and the government therefore has a duty to provide it. The possibility that it will do so if only one behaves badly or impulsively enough acts as an irritant in domestic relations: for if a move elsewhere is a real possibility, you can afford to let a minor disagreement escalate into an irreparable breakdown.

So do pigs make sties, or do sties make pigs? I suspect that there is, as my father used to say, a dialectical relationship. ●

OUR NATION OF IMMIGRANTS
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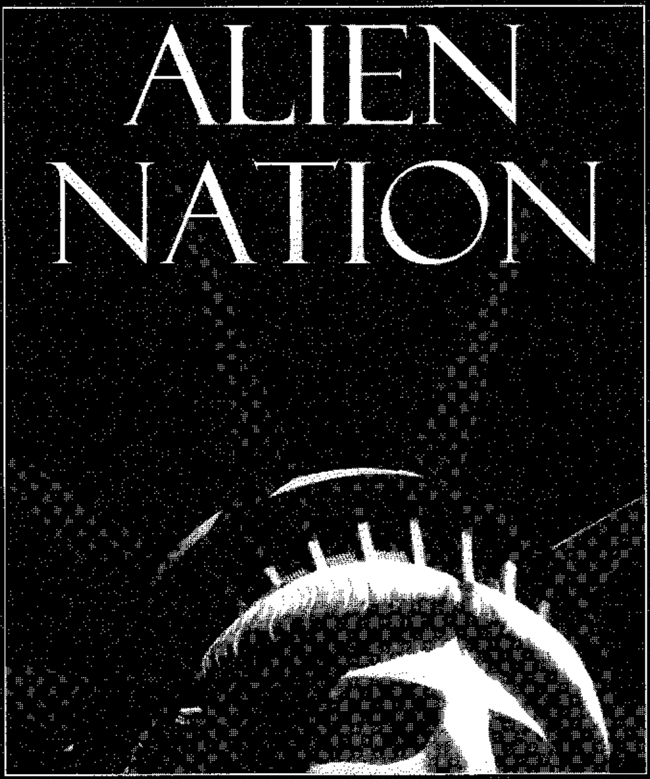

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RANDOM HOUSE

Letters

Getting OTB on the Right Track

To the editor:
Daniel Seligman's fine exploration of New York City's Off-Track Betting ["A Horseplayer's Line on OTB," Spring 1995] had particular resonance for me, a gaming-business professional since 1979. I founded the principal industry trade publication back then and produced several investigative pieces that, alas, came to the same conclusion: OTB is a travesty, and its only salvation is privatization.

OTB's philosophy, so assiduously nursed by Howard "the Horse" Samuels, imparted an odor of sanctity to what was widely conceived as a randy kind of business populated by Runyonesque characters. What OTB failed to recognize, however, and what it still fails to recognize, is that gambling is a business of marketing. The product, from its inception, was wrong.

Bookies extended credit; OTB did not, until many years later. Bookies lent the personal touch, serving their clients anytime they felt the urge to get a few bucks down on a horse. Worse yet, bookies took action on sports—then and now illegal in New York.

Add to this OTB's ever-slovenly premises, incompetent employees, and totally inefficient systems in processing $1 billion worth of wagers a year, and you have a built-in formula for marketing failure: a predictable result every time government selects a business into which it will enter.

The politicization of situating OTB offices was not only a function of patronage jobs among Democratic district leaders but, more blatantly, a real estate leasing boondoggle. Take a map of OTB offices through the years and trace their locations. Many are in buildings owned by party hacks, contributors, and who-knows-what front companies that conceivably were directly tied to politicians. An OTB lease was solid gold, or at least perceived as such because nobody had ever heard of a bookmaker going out of business voluntarily.

Moving on to spend the past 12 years as a senior executive in several Atlantic City casinos, I came to know a lot about New York gamblers and have long counseled the boards of companies I worked for to look at OTB. There is no reason why—if it were freed of the labor and realty problems and the debilitating political atmosphere—OTB could not be a tax-contributing entity if it were in private hands.

A successful privatization plan for OTB must be based on two fundamental principles.

First, it has to be a no-strings-attached auction sale to a bidder. There are no core goodwill assets—only bad-will liabilities. A buyer should pay for only what's usable in equipment. All other buyout hits should be absorbed by the city and the total returned to it over time, in an allocated, mandated portion of a presumed gaming tax to amortize it over a period of years.

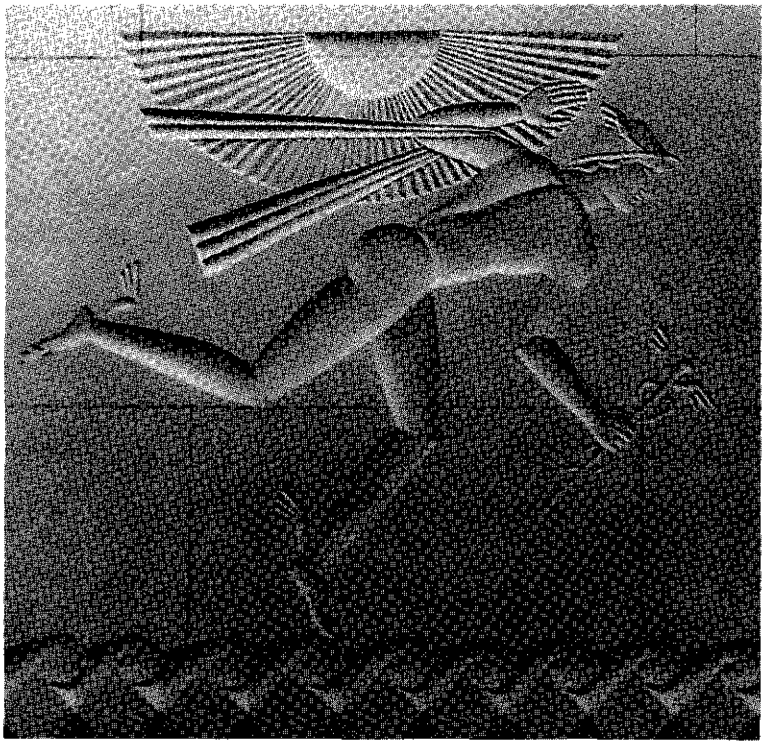
Second, the city should have no residual interest in locations, labor, configuration, or work rules. A private operator may well elect to build three or four mega-OTB casino-type establishments among the boroughs linked to a few strategically placed satellite offices. This is the kind of decision a buyer needs to be able to make if he so chooses. The city's only interest should be in collecting the gaming tax.

Operating from these principles, the city could approach any number of excellent gaming companies with long records of integrity and simply say: "Make me an offer."

Howard J. Klein
Margate, N.J.

How We Lost Love

To the editor:
Kay Hymowitz's fine "The 'L' Word: Love as Taboo" [Spring 1995] stops short of fingering the ultimate cause of our predicament. The withering of love in modern America is a symptom and consequence of secularization.



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The loss of awareness of and belief in the transcendent, the rise of philosophical materialism, and the displacement of religion by science, with its stress on quantification and "objectivity," have demystified life and shorn it of wonder. In a culture which holds that there is no God and no soul, only matter, the demystification of women, the disprizing of beauty, the death of love, and the "robotization of sex" were inevitable.

Modern secular America conspicuously lacks a sense of the sacred, and of reverence. If there is no God, only matter, nothing is sacred or worthy of reverence—including oneself and one's "partner."

And without a benevolent personal God, the universe is inexplicable, meaningless, and alien—hence frightening. The prevailing American emotion today is fear. From politicians who flinch from a true battle of the budget to parents who don't enforce discipline because they fear their children's disapproval to the young lovers who flee from deep emotion and "commitment," Americans are running scared as never before. Reaching out to another in love is a brave act. People who are terrified of life can't afford to run such risks.

Moreover, loss of belief in the loving God of Judaism and Christianity undermines love between people. The emotions of a religious outlook are those required for successful romantic love and marriage: faith, trust, devotion, self-transcendence, reverence for the other. It is no accident that idealistic romantic love arose in deeply Catholic feudal Europe. A deeply religious person is naturally oriented toward love and devotion in a way that unbelievers or nihilists simply aren't.

The "obsession with personal autonomy" that Ms. Hymowitz rightly deplores is, in fact, the amoral radical egoism propounded in the Marquis de Sade's novels. Sade, incidentally, was a precursor of modernity's "era of liberation" from constraints, especially religious and moral ones. In a godless world of mere matter, nothing outside yourself has meaning; others have no claim on you.

Sade's "free, self-contained individual" adopts the maxim: "Enjoy myself, no matter at whose expense." Hence modern man treats woman, as Sade's character Durand said, as an "object I use for the simple and unique purpose of consumption, and with which I enter into no other relationship." Sound familiar?

Today's fascination with sadomasochism is the logical culmination of a Sadean worldview denying God and human dignity, devoid of love and tenderness, deeming people as mere objects, putting a premium on degradation, and sanc-

Letters

tioning any means to obtain a thrill.

There *is* a spiritual reality; we are metaphysical amphibians living in both the spiritual and material realms; and beliefs have consequences. Godless, pragmatist modernity is a radical treason to human nature, a murderer of our souls, a denial of our highest possibilities. How could love flourish in such a climate? Surely the Hound of Heaven spoke truly in Francis Thompson's poem: "Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

John Attarian
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Empowerment for Whom?

To the editor:
Mitchell Moss's "Where's the Power in the Empowerment Zone?" [Spring 1995] misrepresents New York's Empowerment Zone proposal and shows the author's faulty understanding of inner-city economic development.

Professor Moss argues that for the Empowerment Zone to succeed it must "focus on encouraging private-sector job creation." "Instead," he continues, "current plans for the zone look like an enormous safety net for social services." Professor Moss's statement makes it appear that New York's Empowerment Zone application was not concerned with creating private-sector jobs but rather was designed to pump money into failed public-sector and not-for-profit social welfare programs.

In truth, New York's application took into account the substantial public investment already planned in Harlem and the South Bronx—billions of dollars over the next ten years in capital construction alone, with similar levels of investment in health care and social services. What makes these investments look as if they create "dependency" or "safety nets" is that relatively few Empowerment Zone residents or businesses work on these building projects or have jobs delivering these services.

The centerpiece of the city's application, which Professor Moss's article completely ignores, is a "first-source" strategy designed to increase the participation of local businesses and residents in work the government already pays for—in areas such as construction, toxic removal, health care, day care, and home services. This is an inside-out development strategy, not an outside-in rescue effort.

In addition, private investments in the zone, contrary to Professor Moss's characterization, are leveraged primarily against public investments in housing, not a Third World Trade Center. Moreover, the application has numerous proposals for creating private-sector job and investment opportunities in the 125th Street business corridor, tourism industry proposals, small business incubators, health industry proposals, and a One-Stop Capital Shop.

Professor Moss seems unaware of the studies that show businesses are generally much more concerned about neighborhood quality of life (especially crime) and the quality of the local workforce than they are about tax incentives. This partly explains why enterprise zones, in their earlier incarnations, have been mostly unsuccessful in reducing inner-city poverty. New York's Empowerment Zone application takes into account these experiences and tries to harness the resources of the community—yes, even the public-sector resources—to work for community residents and businesses.

Furthermore, it did not ignore the true concerns of the business community. The strategic goals of the New York Empowerment Zone explicitly focus on expanding the range of economic opportunities in the community through increasing access to capital, investment in education and job creation, and links to the city and regional economy, as well as first-source procurement and hiring policies.

It is only a small group of Republicans in Washington, and apparently Professor Moss, who believe that it is possible to move the city's most impoverished population to jobs without extensive and effective outreach efforts, day care, and regular access to medical care.

There is no question that any public policy focused on reducing inner-city poverty will have great difficulty achieving its goal. Yet we believe that there is a need for anti-poverty policies and that the Empowerment Zone approach has a real chance of succeeding. Further, Harlem and the South Bronx are open to any constructive proposals Professor Moss or anyone else might offer for improving their Empowerment Zone plan.

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Mitchell Moss responds:
It's unquestionably true that "any public policy focused on reducing inner-city poverty will have great difficulty achieving its goal." But no combination of federal money, community support, and political clout is sufficient to generate jobs unless it's based on a clear economic rationale that builds on market forces, community assets, and technological trends.

Professors Fuchs, McIntyre, Thompson, and Stafford seem to believe that economic development consists of substantial public investment to create jobs in social services, and that those services will eventually render the community appealing to private investors. On the contrary, the experience of the past 30 years has overwhelmingly demonstrated that such a strategy is guaranteed to make the community even more dependent on the public sector while diverting energy and resources away from business creation and entrepreneurship.

An economy based on publicly subsidized social services creates no real wealth and is, ultimately, unsustainable. Once the federal Empowerment Zone money is spent, Harlem will be no better off economically than it is today.

Public investment in the zone should be designed to create the conditions that will attract private investment, as it is in the Bronx portion of the plan. That means encouraging small business, retail activity, and wealth-creating activity like the private development of vacant land. A healthy private economy is the best social program: a real job goes further than any government program to strengthen an individual's capacity to cope with life's challenges.

The authors propose to reinforce, rather than reduce, the area's reliance on public programs—at the very time when those programs are being cut back nationwide. No one should be surprised when this approach fails.

More Lessons from Boston

To the editor:
Sol Stern ["Let's Seize This Chance for School Reform," Spring 1995] rightly points out Boston's successes in reestablishing the rule of common sense rather than teachers' union hegemony. Boston enjoys a certain synergy between business, government, and academia that allows it to provide more "bang for the buck" to taxpayers. Boston also has one of the few large municipal governments that are open to anyone with a personal computer and modem. New York City would do well to copy Boston's model in education as well as in many other areas.

Marcia H. Lemmon
New York, N.Y.

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New York Diarist

Au Revoir, Grande Pomme

David Brooks

It is traditional, upon moving from New York, to write an essay with a title such as "Los Angeles Oui, New York Non." Typically, the author confuses his own departure with the ruin of the city. For the modest, the logic is: the city is in decline; therefore I am leaving. For those whose teachers have succeeded in inculcating healthy self-esteem, it is: I am leaving; therefore the city is in decline.

This isn't one of those pieces. True, my departure is a catastrophe for the metropolis, but no worse than the blizzard of 1888 or the Great Depression. In time, New York will recover.

This essay is built on hard economic science. I am leaving this city that I love simply because I found that I could not crash through the SPT, the Social Policy Threshold—the income level a family must attain in order to survive the perverse effects of bad social policies.

In calculating the SPT for Manhattan, we begin with rent control. My family consists of husband, wife, son, daughter. That means we will require a three-bedroom apartment. In middle-class Manhattan, that costs around $3,400 a month: to afford such a rent, pre-tax income must be in the $190,000 range. We're touching 200G after only one social policy.

In a city with a lower SPT, the situation is much different. In Washington, not strangled by rent control, three-bedroom apartments are also hard to come by. But that's because families that require such space tend to live in—and here I proceed slowly so New Yorkers don't get confused—a building known as a "house." A house is a building with one apartment surrounded by a Central Park–like area known as a "yard." New York has a house; it's called Gracie Mansion. A three-bedroom house (with den) in a middle-class part of Washington costs about $1,800 a month.

This leads us to other social policy costs. New York boasts a lavishly funded school system that is avoided by all who can afford to. One must pay tuition at a good private school—some $16,000 a year per child. For my two children, that requires pre-tax earnings of about $60,000 a year. Two social policies, and the SPT is up to a quarter-million dollars. Washington, of course, has also screwed up its public schools. But its SPT is not as high. My son is leaving a superb Jewish school in Manhattan for one in Washington, where tuition is half as much.

Space does not allow a full enumeration of all SPT components. The tax bite is larger due to perverse fiscal policies; security costs are higher due to underclass-fostering welfare policies; burdens on small business mean that I have to pay $6 for a sandwich that sells in Chicago, say, for under $4.

Not every New Yorker earns $324,879.03 a year. This amount, I have calculated, through regression analyses too complex for you to understand, constitutes the SPT for middle-class New Yorkers. The people below this level can be divided into three groups. First, those who actually benefit from social programs, such as municipal workers. Second, those who actually live in rent-controlled apartments, commonly known as "scum-sucking parasites." Finally, those who are romantic to the point of self-destruction.

Until recently I was one of the latter. I used to take my kids down to the playground in Central Park at 81st Street, filled with interesting kids and parents. I'd sit on the bench and look up at the towers of the Beresford, at 81st and Central Park West. "Isn't New York grand!" I'd think.

Well no. My New York isn't the Beresford. My New York is a dingy building at 98th and Broadway. My New York isn't the glorious views of the park; it's Nobody Beats the Wiz. I was enjoying *their* New York, the people above the SPT.

I am willing to endure only so much in order to be close to people who are enjoying the city I cannot afford. So we're off to Washington. There, for the price of one misguided New York social policy, I can afford to keep top city officials fully stocked with . . . whatever they like. ●

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